

# SCARLET *Street*

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## Features and Departments

- 4 Scarlet Letters
- 12 Frankly Scarlet
- 16 Our Founding Fathers
- 18 The News Hound
- 22 Screen and Screen Again
- 26 Charlie Chan:  
The Great Chan Ban
- 28 Formerly Kay Linaker:  
Kate Phillips
- 32 Attack of the Horror Hags
- 41 John Ireland Remembers:  
Joan (Dearest Mommy)
- 46 Haunting Performances:  
Julie Harris
- 52 A Touch of Glamour:  
Debbie Reynolds
- 72 Book Ends
- 78 The Sherlock Holmes  
Collections
- 81 Classifieds

COVER: Debbie Reynolds in *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?* (1971, by Bill Chancellor), Bette Davis in *THE ANNIVERSARY* (1968).



# Scarlet Letters

I am still reeling at the knowledge that there was once a three-hour version of ROMULUS AND REMUS (DUEL OF THE TITANS), as mentioned by Gordon Scott in his interview in *Scarlet Street* #49. Call AFI! Call Robert Gitt! Call the Library of Congress! Let's make restoring this one a major priority!

Read Richard Valley's FRANKLY, SCARLET column this morning and perhaps Streets unfamiliar with Manhattan won't realize just how plausible this very funny anecdote can be—and the choice of accompanying the article with Bing and Bob is so right! This has become one of my favorite issues ever!

JEEPERS CREEPERS: GREAT SONGS FROM HORROR FILMS has been riding in my car for awhile now and my admiration for Bruce Kimmel's production grows with each hearing. There's some great stuff going on here. The clarinet solo on "Goody Goody," that terrific bass and delicate mysterious opening to MOTHRA, the great pseudo-Andrews Sisters mix on "Aurora"—so many treats. And I've found myself singing counterpoint harmony every time "The Faithful Heart" (my favorite) plays. The rock n' roll medley captures the early sound of Bill Haley and the rock that existed just after the postwar pop stuff. Jason Graae certainly performs it well. I still enjoy John Ashley (and his great hair), but it's great to hear it on-key! This album presents these wonderful songs in fresh, beautifully rendered, stylish settings. The singers couldn't be better chosen: the comedic stylings of Judy Kaye and Alison Fraser, the sheer loveliness of Rebecca Luker. Susan (bless her and her dad) Gordon sounds great. (She's not a pro singer like the others, but she's supported and presented extremely well.) Is there a better tenor than Brent Barrett?

Farnham Scott  
Temperance, MI

Thanks for using the photo of my pal Eric Johnson as Sherlock Holmes in THE EBONY APE. (*Scarlet Street* #49) He's a terrific actor and was great as Holmes in the play. He's also quite a talented artist and did the original artwork for the play's poster as well.

Charles Edward Pogue  
Hollywood, CA

Raymond Banacki's tribute to Horst Buchholz in the current *Scarlet Street* (#49) is well-intentioned but not entirely accurate.

I first met Buchholz at a film festival in Berlin in the 1950s, where he was being touted as Germany's answer to James Dean by a producer who had signed him to a personal contract. After a number of forgettable pictures, he had made a breakthrough as the leader of a motorcycle gang in a film called DIE HALB-

STARKEN. It was acquired for American distribution by an independent company that dubbed it into English, retitled it TEENAGE WOLF PACK, and renamed its star Henry Bookholt. Neither this film nor THE CONFESSIONS OF FELIX KRULL impressed American audiences.

Buchholz did not achieve international fame until TIGER BAY, which brought him to Hollywood. Nevertheless, he was less than memorable in THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN, in which he was overshadowed by the all-star cast, and the film FANNY, which was a Hollywood version of a classic French film by Marcel Pagnol, was a failure. Somewhere along the line, Buchholz attempted a Broadway stage appearance as a gigolo in a play by Colette, which opened and closed. On that occasion, we became reacquainted.

He returned to Europe, where he appeared in THE EMPTY CANVAS and a number of other films, none of which made any impact in the United States. Eventually he returned to Hollywood and had a busy career in television.

When Radley Metzger and I decided to make a new color version of THE CAT AND THE CANARY in England in 1977, we thought that Buchholz would be well cast in the role of Charlie Wilder (who turns out to be "the Cat"). I contacted his Hollywood agent, negotiated the deal, and we signed a contract. Two weeks before the start of shooting, when we were already immersed in preproduction in London, Buchholz reneged on our



contract, claiming he had forgotten about a prior commitment with a stage producer in Germany, whom he had given an option on his services. Our solicitors in London recommended that we file suit, but we decided it was not worth the time and trouble, let alone the cost, and we replaced him with Peter McEnery.

I never saw Buchholz again until he appeared in LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL, in which he acted well enough, but it was hardly a notable role. Raymond Banacki ends his tribute by saying that Buchholz should have made more of a commitment to American Cinema. I am afraid the problem was that American Cinema showed no interest in making a commitment to Horst Buchholz.

Richard Gordon  
Gordon Films, Inc.  
New York, NY

The JEEPERS CREEPERS: GREAT SONGS FROM HORROR FILMS CD is so well performed and sung that I felt I was right back in the movie theater, being thrilled and suspended in time.

Al Kasha  
Beverly Hills, CA

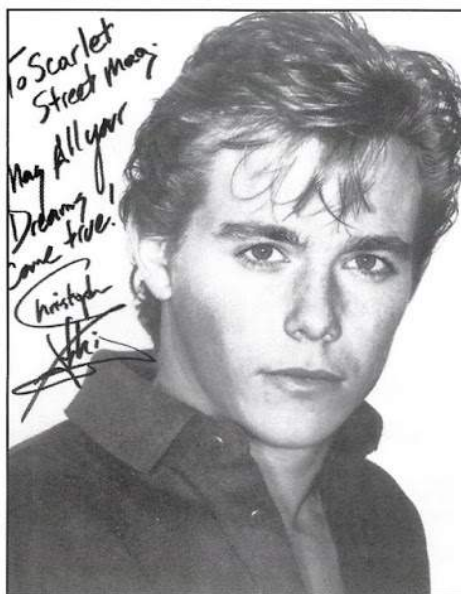
That's much appreciated praise from the Oscar-winning composer for such films as THE POSEIDON ADVENTURE, THE TOWERING INFERNO, and WHO KILLED TEDDY BEAR? (the last sung by Tammi Tappan on JEEPERS CREEPERS).

I had an odd reaction to the term "Attack of the Horror Hags," in Ken Hanke's otherwise fine piece in *Scarlet Street* #49.

Ken traces the trend from Billy Wilder's SUNSET BLVD (a horror movie, Hanke contends, and I agree), through BABY JANE, SWEET CHARLOTTE, STRAIT-JACKET, DEAD RINGER, and LADY IN A CAGE, sixties films that starred the likes of Bette Davis, Joan Crawford, Olivia De Havilland, and others. There's great stuff about the Davis/Crawford rivalry, culminating at the 1962 Oscars when Crawford accepted the award for winner Anne Bancroft while Davis, nominated, sat and seethed.

I must confess, though, that the term "Horror Hags" bothers me a lot. Heck, I even recoil at the term "Scream Queen"—and here, too, "hags" sounds overly pejorative and maybe even offensive. Ken does call the term "unfortunate," but uses it anyway. Others will disagree, I

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Christopher Atkins

Continued on page 10



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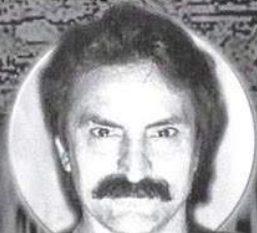
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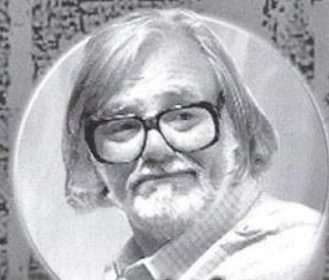
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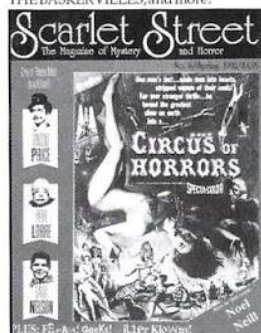
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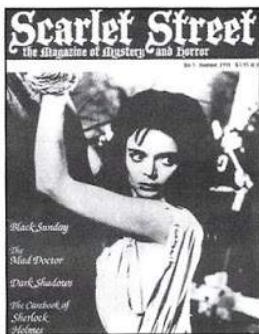
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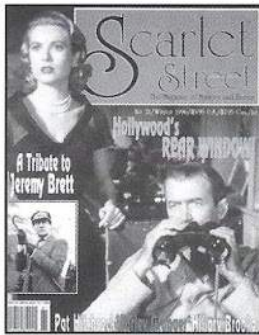


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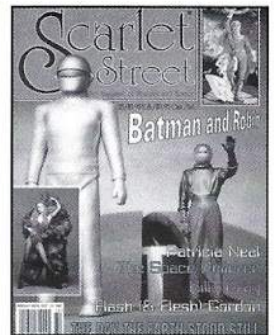
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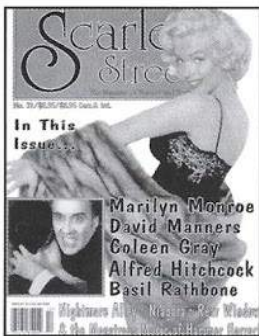
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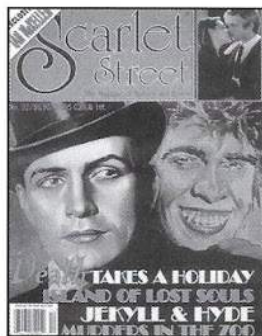
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#48: David Hedison, Brett Halsey, David Frankham, THE FLY, Ann Rutherford, Charles Edward Pogue, WHISTLING IN THE DARK, Ricou Browning, Tom Hennessey, Forry Ackerman, The Comic Book Creature, Musicals on DVD, Television Detectives, and more!



#49: Music to Die For: Jeepers Creepers, Muscling in on the Movies, Gordon Scott, Mark Forest, Reg Lewis, Attack of the Horror Hags, Charles Edward Pogue, Anthony Perkins Sings, Screeners: Cute Guys in Their Underpants Drop Dead, Fiends of a Feather, and more!



#50: Debbie Reynolds, Julie Harris, Kate Phillips (Kay Linaker), The Great Charlie Chan Ban, Attack of the Horror Hags, Our Founding Fathers (Forrest J Ackerman, James Warren, Jeremy Brett, and Zacherley), John Ireland on Joan Crawford, The Sherlock Holmes Collections, and more!

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#### SCARLET LETTERS

Continued from page 4

suppose, but I find it off-putting and maybe another buzz word could have been used. Horror Banshees? Hmm—that might be even worse!

Maybe because I'm getting old enough (mid-fifties), to see life through their eyes. Well, not quite yet, but . . .

David Colton  
 Arlington, VA

Somewhere—though we haven't been able to track it down—there's a monster mag from the sixties referring to WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE and its offspring as starring "horror hags." The article itself may actually have been called "Attack of the Horror Hags," though that's questionable. A number of fans tried to track down the specific mag without luck, though a few remembered the term being used. The closest we came was a Mad parody titled "Hack, Hack, Sweet Has-been"—which is, if anything, even more insulting. (An actress can achieve hagdom in films via makeup and costuming, but "has-been" refers to them in real life.) At any rate, when we started putting the piece together I titled a thread on the Scarlet Street Message Boards "Attack of the Horror Hags" and decided to make that the title of the article as well. Ken had no objections, and certainly the intention wasn't to insult the stars of these films, but to give an impression of the kind of press these films received at the time.

✉

Mucho good reading. I enjoyed the Screen Hags Part One, of course. The let-

ters, photos from the JEEPERS CREEPERS sessions, the DVD round up, Scared Boys in Underpants. Michael Barnum's interviews with Reg Lewis and Mark Forest. The Gordon Scott interview. Scared Boys in Underpants. The DVD Reviews. Scared Boys in Underpants. And I have to say that in this issue—and all the others—the picture captions are great! The captions are a cross between Mad and the New Yorker!

An outstanding issue! Oh, and Scared Boys in Underpants.

Jack Randall Earles  
 Mooresville, IN

✉

Scarlet Street #48 focuses on the fifties genre classic THE FLY and its sequels, as well as the remakes it ultimately inspired. All of the interviews are enjoyable, as is Erich Kuersten's intriguing essay on the subject. An interview with underrated actress Patrica Owens would have been the icing on the issue's cake, so to speak, but unfortunately she passed away back in 2000. Ms. Owens was remarkable in THE FLY as devoted wife Helene Delambre, engendering audience empathy in a performance of greater substance and depth than the typical "scream queen" role of the era. Director Kurt Neumann, screenwriter James Clavell, and star Al (David) Hedison also carried out their various cinematic tasks with skill and aplomb.

THE FLY spawned a unique pair of sequels. The black-and-white RETURN

OF THE FLY was a darker, more somber film than its bright Technicolor predecessor, while CURSE OF THE FLY was something completely different, although no less interesting. David Cronenberg's 1986 remake had its merits as well, in particular Jeff Goldblum's amazing performance. However, I must concur with David Hedison's comment that "the original FLY is a better film because it stuck to the story." I have been a fan of the George Langelaan story ever since I found it in Peter Haining's 1971 collection *The Ghouls*. Of course, there are variations between the story and James Clavell's screenplay, but in general the film version of THE FLY remains true to its literary source.

Even good ol' Forry Ackerman gets into THE FLY mode for this issue in his always entertaining CRIMSON CHRONICLES column. He no doubt fondly recalls the first film in the series, as both *Famous Monsters of Filmland* and THE FLY were unleashed in the year 1958, some 46 years past. Gosh, where would genre mags like *Scarlet Street* be if the pioneering FJA had not paved the way a long time ago? Would they exist at all? Perhaps only The Shadow and Sherlock Holmes know for sure.

Timothy M. Walters  
 Muskogee, OK

Where would *Scarlet Street* and other genre magazines be had it not been for Forry Ackerman and (never forget) James Warren? Nowhere, most likely. But "Here we are!" (as li'l Donnie Dunagan said in SON OF FRANK-



ENSTEIN) and those two pioneers have something to say about it on page 16 of this very issue!



I'd just like to point out a very minor error in the musicals article in *Scarlet Street* #48: the MIGHTY MANHATTAN short subject feature on the KISS ME KATE DVD is not from 1953. It was shot circa 1948/1949, probably just before and/or when MGM was doing the location work for ON THE TOWN. The Technicolor footage of the travelogue looks very much like the late forties color cinematography of ON THE TOWN, while the look of KATE is much different, much more fifties populuxe. Also, if you look closely at the Times Square footage, MELODY TIME and EASTER PARADE (both 1948), are showing at the (now vanished) Astor and Loew's State theaters. Very appropriate though, are the shots of the Waldorf Astoria, where Cole Porter and his wife, Linda, occupied the penthouse, and where Porter probably wrote KATE. And the rare interior shots of the Waldorf's Starlight Roof look as glamorous as any MGM set, especially when Ann Miller is seen descending the mirrored staircase. Other MGM plugs include shots of Xavier Cugat's orchestra playing the Starlight, and even Mrs. Nicholas Schenk, wife of the MGM executive, doing charity work.

But, oolala, I have to contest the statement that "Ca C'est L'Amour" (from LES GIRLS) is simply a rewrite of "C'est Magnifique" (from CAN CAN). Though I agree LES GIRLS is not a major score and that the lyric concept is similar, "Ca C'est" is one of Porter's best-loved songs,

a real minor mode French chanson, while "C'est Magnifique" is a pleasant, upbeat American theater song with a French accent. Musically and mood-wise, they are not remotely comparable.

Ross Care  
Ventura, CA

Thanx for the MIGHTY MANHATTAN information, Ross. I'll continue to disagree with you on Cole Porter's "C'est Magnifique" and "Ca C'est L'Amour," though. The latter seems an obvious retread of the former and tells precisely the same lyric story: love is wonderful when it comes to you, it's awful when the loved one hits the road, Jack, and it's wonderful again when the loved one comes back. The mood's the same, the tempo is similar, and both songs use French phrases in an otherwise English lyric for their titles.



I had a subscription to *Scarlet Street* earlier this year, but my eyesight is beginning to fail me at the ripe old age of 52. My local Blind Center is aware of my passion for *Scarlet Street*, so they are going to hook up a scanner to my computer so it will read *Scarlet Street* for me. My brother and I are glad to see Forrest J Ackerman on your staff. All of my family and friends back East were weaned on *Famous Monsters of Filmland* for the past four of five decades.

Keep up the good work on your displays of male nudity. It really cracks me up when I see a vertical smile on some young actor and then wait for the public outcry from some of your readers who may not be secure enough in their masculinity to handle male nudity. My lady friends like to borrow my copy of *Scarlet Street* for just that purpose. Thanks again

for another excellent and long awaited *Scarlet Street*!

Michael B. Reeser  
Santa Rosa, CA



Received Volumes One and Two of THE SHERLOCK HOLMES COLLECTION on DVD and I'm delighted. Excellent prints—the best I've seen in over 30 years of watching these movies—and fun, informative liner notes by Richard Valley that will provide useful information to the first-timers and smiles to those of us who, like myself, already know it all. (Well, almost all—it never occurred to me that "Joe Kearns" was one and the same with the guy who played Mr. Wilson, or who was a comic foil to The Three Stooges in one of their rare forays into television.)

Richard's sense of humor shines in his writing. ("CHARLIE CHAN CARRIES ON was carried off . . ."/"Basil Rathbone sporting a scandalously Bohemian coiffure . . .") Said lightness of touch is in perfect keeping with the movies themselves and with the original Doyle stories, which rank among the best comic literature of all time. I usually don't have time for liner notes or extras—when all is said and done, the movie itself (the artifact) is the only really important thing—but these are a joy to read. And including the voice of someone who was there (Hillary Brooke, for instance) is a nice touch.

Ah, THE SHERLOCK HOLMES COLLECTION Volume Two. This is the one Sherlockaholics have been waiting for, es-

*Continued on page 14*



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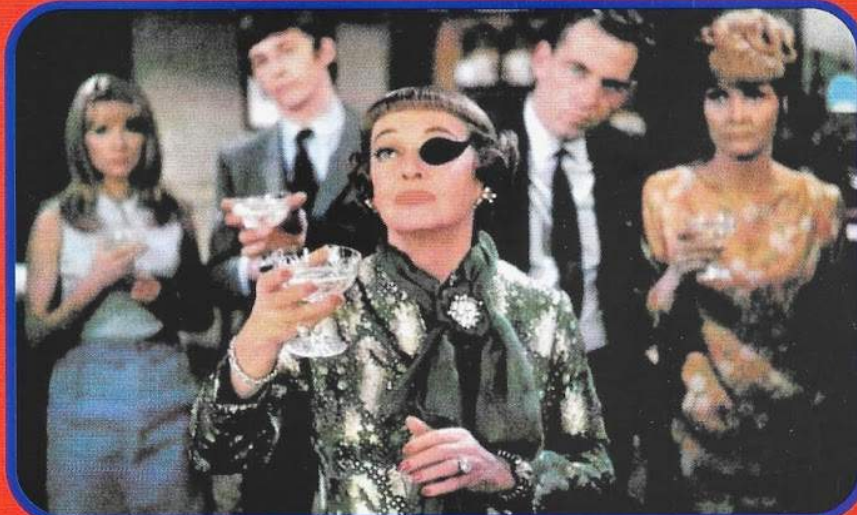
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# Frankly Scarlet

It's our 50th Issue Anniversary, and the one and only Miss Bette Davis (pictured TOP RIGHT with—appropriately—the cast of 1968's *THE ANNIVERSARY*) lifts a glass of the bubbly by way of celebration! The Dame with the Bette Davis Eyes (and remember, she had 'em first) is just one of many stars of a certain age covered by Ken Hanke in the insightful second half of *ATTACK OF THE HORROR HAGS*, *Scarlet Street*'s controversial coverage of a fright flick subgenre of the sixties and seventies. (Below *THE ANNIVERSARY*, you'll find a rare photo of Barbara Stanwyck performing "Disco Inferno" in a musical scene cut from 1965's *THE NIGHT WALKER*.)

Several of the films covered by the esteemed Mr. Hanke in his startling expose were previously featured



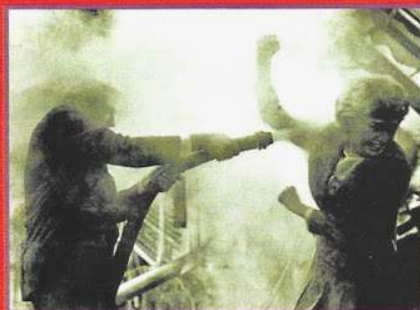
in *Scarlet Street*, particularly *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?* (1971), which was highlighted in our 11th issue back in 1993. Along with my own article on the film, the issue included Kevin Shinnick's interview with director Curtis Harrington and then-publisher Jessie Lilley's interview with one of the film's stars—Shelley Winters. We'd also hoped to interview *HELEN*'s other star—Debbie Reynolds—at the time, but sadly it never happened. (Debbie was making *HEAVEN & EARTH* for Oliver Stone at the time and invited us to interview her on the set, but a trip to Sunny Cal was considerably beyond our budget.)

For 10 years, I considered Debbie Reynolds the one that got away—then, in January of this year and with our revisit to *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?* in the works, I received an E-mail concerning an auction of Hollywood memorabilia and a special guest appearance by none other than Debbie Reynolds. Well, nothing ventured, nothing gained, so I wrote back requesting an interview. The following morning, I received another E-mail, this one instructing me to phone Reynolds's son, Todd Fisher, to see about chatting with his famous mom. Calling Fisher's office, I was informed by his secretary that Fisher was on his way out the door, but would call me en route to the auction. Well, that's that, thought I—the bum's rush, and to the tune of "Good Morning," yet—but I told the secretary I'd remain in the office and wait for the call. Half an hour later, the phone went jingle, jangle, jingle. "*Scarlet Street*," said I. "Hello, this is Debbie Reynolds," said Debbie Reynolds.

You'll find the interview on page 52 of this issue.

And you'll find that this issue's cover is a colorful recreation by the talented Bill Chancellor of that long-ago cover gracing *Scarlet Street* #11.

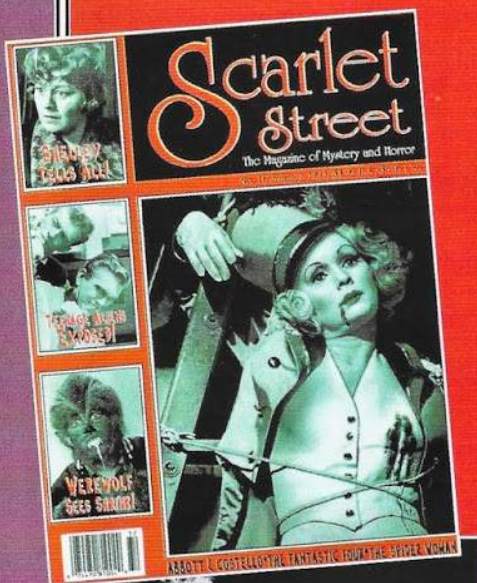
By the way, if you think I had any qualms about running an interview



with Debbie Reynolds in an issue containing an article titled *ATTACK OF THE HORROR HAGS*, well, you underestimate me. Qualms? I damn near had a heart attack! However, as Mr. Hanke points out, it's Shelley Winters who takes the haggish "honors" in *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?*, and Debbie who remains ever glamorous. I'll add that she also remains ever committed to preserving Hollywood history—although she balks at the word "Hollywood." As she told me during our talk:

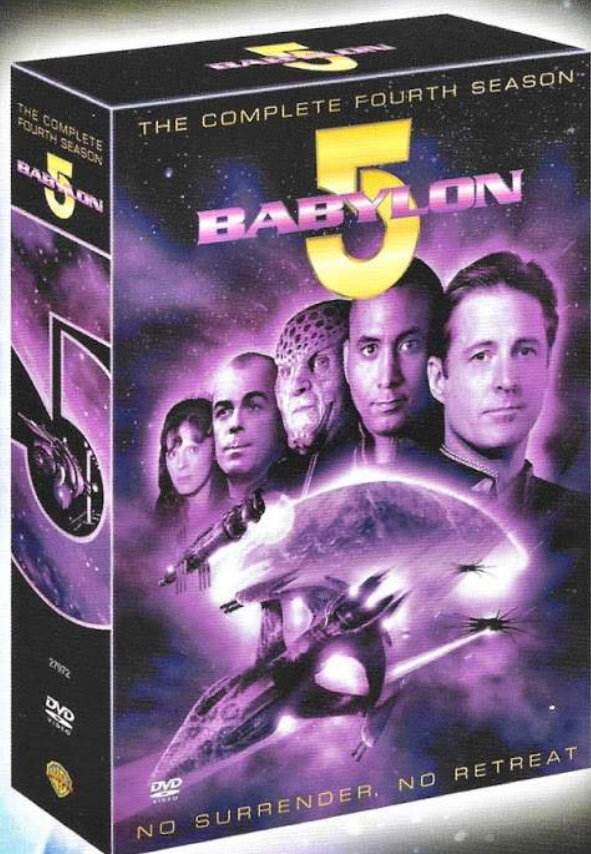
"There's no such word as Hollywood. What does it mean? What is Hollywood? It's a place with streets. We're talking about the industry, the motion picture industry. Do I think it cares about its history? No! I think it's interested in making money, and that's all. I think it's forgotten what it is to produce films that are good films and not garbage. Some great films are produced today, because of some great producers today—but they're individual producers, they're independent producers, like Lucas and Spielberg and the Cohen Brothers. The almighty dollar is not life's answer. No, if we really do want to go down in history—if we really want to leave a good history, if we want to leave the right legacy—then we have to make really fine films."

**Richard Valley**





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## SCARLET LETTERS

*Continued from page 11*

pecially since it contains three of the best films in the Holmes series: *THE PEARL OF DEATH*, *THE SCARLET CLAW*, and *THE SPIDER WOMAN*. One greets the collection with excitement and—truth be told—a bit of a snicker, especially when one sees the Caballero sex-loop possibilities of a title like *SHERLOCK HOLMES IN THE SPIDER WOMAN* on the cover. (I wonder if Sondergaard bit off Rathbone's head afterwards?)

One of the great things about Richard's liner notes is his easy familiarity with Doyle's original stories as well as with the movies themselves. He starts his notes on *PEARL OF DEATH* with a recap of Doyle's own 1927 ranking of the best stories, and how those rankings changed over the years as tastes waxed and waned. For instance, in 1944, the Baker Street Irregulars came up with its own rankings and added "The Six Napoleons" to the list—ironically, the same year *PEARL* was released. Richard does a great job of showing how much (or little) of Doyle's plots figured into the Universal series. And there's great background about all but forgotten players, including Miles Mander, Gerald Hamer, Rondo Hatton, and the aforementioned Ms. Sondergaard. My only (minor) quibble is that, in a listing of Mander's other film roles, the popular *RETURN OF THE VAMPIRE* is not mentioned. Richard's wealth of knowledge even ties in Frank Zappa with the Holmes series. I, for one, am impressed.

Equally impressive is the sense of humor once again on display in Volume Two. "Lady Penrose has gone the way of all fleecce," Richard says of one of the unfortunate lambs in *SCARLET CLAW*, and he also coins a purple phrase for the ages when he makes reference to "Jack the Weeder." (By the way, I'd never noticed how dangerous were garden implements until Richard pointed out their frequent use in other Universal films.) I've seen *SPIDER WOMAN* dozens of times, but had never stopped to think how much of the film comes from Doyle. But Richard has stopped to think and rightly detects the presence of "The Final Problem," "The Empty House," "The Sign of Four," "The Speckled Band," "The Devil's Foot," and "A Scandal in Bohemia" in *SPIDER WOMAN* (presumably after Sherlock Holmes got out of her). He's done his homework here, and it's much appreciated—as are the crystal-clear movie prints. First-rate all the way!

David Morrill  
Williamsburg, VA



I was wondering if Bela Lugosi had bad teeth? I've noticed in some of his photos you can't see his teeth. The other horror/sci-fi zines pale in comparison to *Scarlet Street*. Is it also possible that you'll have more articles on Bela Lugosi's Ygor?

David A. Reeser  
Martinsburg, WV

*Bela Lugosi had bad teeth—but not as bad as Ygor's. Ol' Crooked Neck will undoubtedly return to Scarlet Street one of these days.*



**Broadway's Brent Barrett records the beautiful ballad "Stella by Starlight" for *JEEPERS CREEPERS: GREAT SONGS FROM HORROR FILMS*.**



My God, but *Scarlet Street's* *JEEPERS CREEPERS: GREAT SONGS FROM HORROR FILMS* is an impressive piece of work! I have it playing on my computer, on a gray, wet, dreary late-autumn morning while I'm doing some even drearier research and writing. It's the kind of day and work where, if it were night, I would be expecting the arrival of a raven shortly. The CD is the perfect antidote or ameliorator or facilitator—call it what you will—to these depressing conditions. To call it a lifesaver is hyperbole; to call it a mind-saver, however, is rather close to the truth.

Thank you to all involved in its production. I don't want to slight anyone by singling out someone else, but the female vocalists, as soloists or in harmony, are particularly inducing gooseflesh. Liling, haunting, lighthearted, ethereal—these people are stirring the far reaches of emotions long ossified. Why haven't these Sirens become household names as vocal stars, instead of the banal and redundant covey of one-note San Quentin quail who have become cultural icons? And, by the way, the cover design is particularly riveting—simultaneously whimsically humorous and, if you let your imagination run with it, quite disturbing.

I'd like to let all potential buyers know that I purchased this CD through Paypal and received it in less than a week. It couldn't have been quicker or easier. This from a reader of the magazine who lives remotely enough to be one of the last mail subscribers (if not indeed the last) to receive each current issue. Once again, thanks to all—every facet of the CD's production has been pushing all the right buttons.

The Borgo Kid  
Kewanee, IL

*Here's as good a place as any to note that Scarlet Street is now accepting credit card orders—for *JEEPERS CREEPERS*, for back issues, for subscriptions. You'll find the appropriate order info throughout this issue, or sign on to [www.scarletstreet.com](http://www.scarletstreet.com) for the complete catalogue for the Scarlet Store (DVDs, CDs, photos, etc.).*



In the article *DISNEY'S UNBURIED TREASURES* (SS #47), *Scarlet Street* offered a high opinion of Tommy Kirk as the most talented young actor that Walt Disney ever had under long-term contract.

No young actor ever had a more fabulous entrance into the realm of screen history. In 1957, when he was only 15, Tommy gave very accomplished performances as Travis Coates in Disney's classic tale of a boy and his dog, *OLD YELLER*, and as Wilby Daniels in Disney's classic tale of a boy who becomes a dog, *THE SHAGGY DOG*.

Of course, Walt Disney easily realized that he had a very hot property on his hands and, during Tommy's seven-year contract with the studio, he was put into 11 major film productions. In 1961, Tommy played opposite a very accomplished clown, Ed Wynn, in Disney's first musical production, *BABES IN TOYLAND*. At the age of 19, he kept pace with Ed Wynn every step of the way. In the great lunatic comedies, *THE ABSENT-MINDED PROFESSOR* and its sequel, *SON OF FLUBBER*, Tommy gave us a memorable portrait of Biff Hawk, an All-American boy who tried to steal flubber from its inventor, but, instead, fell victim to its unique powers. And, in his last two films for Disney, Tommy was able to develop a totally endearing college brain, who was always up for a new "scientific experience," in 1964's *THE MISADVENTURES OF MERLIN JONES* and 1965's *THE MONKEY'S UNCLE*.

In *Scarlet Street's* unforgettable interview with Tommy Kirk (SS #10), Tommy spoke frankly about the one specific incident that brought about the end of his career with Walt Disney—the discovery of his homosexuality through his affair with a teenage boy—but he also spoke frankly about his need for alcohol (he started drinking at the age of 14) and about his later addiction to speed and uppers and diet pills, too. Surprisingly, Tommy didn't blame anybody but himself for the abrupt end to his reign as a top Disney star from 1957 to 1964. He confessed to being a "wild Irish kid" and was hellbent on a very self-destructive binge. He just wouldn't be told what was best for him and didn't want help from any concerned parties. Not surprisingly, he had four brushes with death—two near-fatal overdoses and two near-fatal car accidents—and, of course, he lost all of his money and his property, too. Then, of course, he fell into the kind of filmmaking that didn't really give him a second career, but just kept the wolf from the door.

In my opinion, Walt Disney should've made a very serious attempt at intervening in Tommy's life and trying to save this extraordinarily gifted actor from his worst impulses. Walt Disney holds the dubious distinction of firing two of the screen's greatest young actors (with drug-related problems)—Bobby Driscoll and Tommy Kirk. Louis B. Mayer certainly made the attempt more than once with one of the studio's top stars, Judy Garland; he could clearly see the worth



of this unique talent and, in the process, provided her with a far more substantial career than would've been possible for her if he had just washed his hands of her and pushed her out of MGM.

Tommy wouldn't want me to cry any tears over him—he's very tough-minded about his responsibility in the demise of his career and refuses to nurture the kind of hate that can only lead to violence. He's left us with an unforgettable body of work from his years at the Disney Studios—everything that Tommy touched was made memorable through his talent—and, in my opinion, at least, there should be a Tommy Kirk postage stamp and his birthday, Dec. 10, should be a national holiday.

Raymond Banacki

Brooklyn, NY

Tommy also does a mean Joe Besser impression, which he performed (complete with arm pinch on Ye Reditor) at dinner several years ago. It's questionable whether Walt Disney could have done anything to help either Tommy or Bobby Driscoll with their problems. And I very much doubt that Louis B. Mayer's attempts to keep Judy Garland before the cameras had much to do with "parental" concern or altruism.



Enjoyed *Scarlet Street* #48, especially the concluding BLACK LAGOON article. Being a Sherlock Holmes fan, I have two requests that I've never seen approached before, especially the latter.

How about a review of Holmes on audiocassette? And why have films and TV

mostly stayed away from *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Valley of Fear*? Did Granada ever think of *Scarlet*? Did the anti-Morman angle scare them off? And *Fear* is permeated with Moriarty and has a horrible downbeat ending. The film versions of both have been abominations.

So much has been written about *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and it has been filmed—brilliantly at times—so often. What is the secret of the neglect of the other two? In this day and age, why can't *Scarlet* and *Fear* be filmed. And what was the Granada Story?

Allan Grossman

Florence, OR

The popular belief is that the lengthy flashback sequences would have sent the budgets sky-high for any adaptations of *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Valley of Fear*. Certainly, that was Granada's official reason for avoiding them. However, the flashback structure has never stopped anyone from adapting *The Sign of Four*, and a little creative writing could have reduced the budget. Keep in mind, too, that a Granada *Study in Scarlet* would have had to drop Holmes and Watson's first meeting; both Jeremy Brett and Edward Hardwicke were rather old to carry that off.



I want to throw in my two cents about the first set of Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce DVDs. First, it's a pleasure to see these Sherlock Holmes titles in good shape and treated with respect. After years of crummy off-the-air dupes of beat-up 16mm copies, this is a revelation. I also want to remark on Richard

Valley's liner notes, which are splendid and splendidly written. I often wonder if people realize how hard it has to be to do this sort of thing right. Think about it. It has to be knowledgeable enough to offer something to the diehard fan, but it has to be basic enough to be accessible to the novice. On top of that, it has to be done in a relatively short amount of space. With something like this, where both film and source literature have to be considered and dealt with, the problem is just that much worse. So I say that these are truly fine notes, since they manage to combine the source material, have an appeal to both fan and newcomer, and do so within the constraints of the space allotted. Also, they're very entertainingly written and not just dull factoid stuff. Fine work, indeed! The perfect touch to an already worthy group of movies being given a worthy presentation! Thank you, Richard, and thank you, MPI Home Video!

Jeff Preminger

Irvington, NJ

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Yes, kids, it's the *Scarlet Street* Slightly Mangled Special. We have in our vaults some issues with minor defects: price tags glued on the covers, a folded page, a gypsy curse scrawled on the classifieds . . . nothing too grim, but enough to render them unsuitable for sale at the usual rate.

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# OUR FOUNDING FATHERS

FORREST J ACKERMAN ♦ JAMES WARREN ♦ ZACHERLEY ♦ JEREMY BRETT

by Richard Valley

There are times when I marvel at how appropriate it was to name this magazine after a street. It's been a long and winding road with many fascinating twists and unexpected turns, many breathtaking vistas and crowded neighborhoods, and countless colorful side streets. What's more, the fine folk I've met on the street have a way of reappearing from out of the past that's proven positively Dickensian.

For instance, there are those famous names from the past whose inspiration was directly responsible for what began life as *Scarlet Street: The Magazine of Mystery and Horror* and is now simply *Scarlet Street*. I call them Our Founding Fathers. They are Forrest J Ackerman; James Warren; the late Jeremy Brett; and John Zacherley, the last named better known as Zacheryley, the Cool Ghoul. They grace *Scarlet Street's* own Mount Rushmore on this very page, thanks to a fabulous illustration rendered by the fantastically talented Frank Dietz.

*"Crimson Congratulations to Scarlet Street for 50 fiery issues of outstanding excellence in the filmmonster genre, the filmmagazine of magnificent coverage of Karloff, Lugosi, Chaney Sr. and Jr., Lorre, Lanchester, Price, Hatfield, and, er, even Dracula himself, Ed Wood! My mailbox, here in Horrorwood Karloffornia, will be ghoulishly gasping for your next 50 fascinating issues."*

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It was television horror host Zacheryley who led me to *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, Forrest J Ackerman, and James Warren. I'd begun watching the Cool Ghoul in 1959, and quickly became what every kid who ever fell under his spell thought himself—Zach's Number One Fan. When he announced one night that he'd been interviewed for a monster magazine (what was a monster magazine?) and held up a copy of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* #7 with his own leering visage on the cover, I knew I had to have that mag. When I finally found a copy of FM, I entered a fantastic world of vampires, werewolves, man-made monsters, gill men, alligator people, giant behemoths, and something even rarer than all of those—a magazine with its own distinct personality.

That personality belonged to one man with many names—Forrest J Ackerman, Uncle Forry, the Ackemonster, the one, the only Dr. Acula. Like a mustachioed Auntie Mame from the Land Beyond Beyond, he opened a new window and taught me that monsters were good for me. Decades later, when Forry agreed to write his CRIMSON CHRONICLES column for *Scarlet Street*, I could only wonder at so long a journey ending so appropriately. Happily, the journey continues, and last fall *Scarlet Street* won a coveted Forry Award for our friendship and support for the man who started it all. (Scarlet Staffer Terry Pace can be seen in the Page 17 photo TOP LEFT attacking Forry with the award—a hand wearing Dracula's ring and an Im-Ho-Tep cufflink.) I couldn't possibly treasure an award more!



Happy 50th Issue Birthday to *Scarlet Street*! Nobody today does it as well as you do. Richard Valley and Tom Amorosi were young fans when *Famous Monsters* started changing the way the world felt about the genre. And now, you two ex-readers have reached number 50 on the ladder of *Scarlet Street's* success. Dear reader: look at any recent issue and you'll see why this success is well-deserved. It makes me happy and proud to celebrate this 50th issue with you. *Scarlet Street* is the best in keeping the Monsters Famous, and the Street Scarlet.

—Jim Warren

Of course, there was another man who started it all—in fact, he hired Forry—and even as a child of nine I was well aware of him. He was James Warren. He was the publisher. (Jim is pictured BOTTOM RIGHT with Forry and Don Post maskmaker Verne Langdon.)

James Warren rarely wrote much in *Famous Monsters*, but at the time I figured there was a good reason for that. There seemed always to be a flashy dame on the staff of FM, a woman invariably described as a "man aging editor." Being a mere boy and a beardless youth, I'd no idea how this remarkable siren could doom a man to premature deterioration, but I just knew it explained why James Warren never wrote much in FM—he was exhausted!

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In *Scarlet Street's* early days, our major focus was on mysteries in general and Sherlock Holmes in particular—particularly, Jeremy Brett's interpretation of that classic role. We interviewed Jeremy a number of times in our formative years, and met him one memorable day at the Mysterious Bookstore in NYC. (He's pictured with several Baker Street Irregulars BOTTOM LEFT.) That day, I recorded the following comments:

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Which brings us back to Zacheryley (TOP RIGHT), who I first met when I visited WPIX in New York and helped him scoop up Phyllis the Amoeba from the studio floor. We met often at shows over the past decade and then, some 44 years after I first saw him on TV, Tom and I had the great pleasure of inviting Zach to be a special guest artist on *Scarlet Street's* first CD—JEEPERS CREEPERS: GREAT SONGS FROM HORROR FILMS. Here's the Cool Ghoul with a wrap-up:

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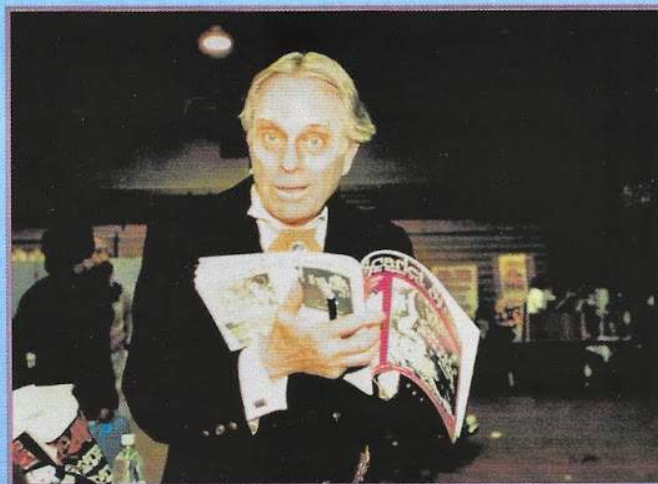
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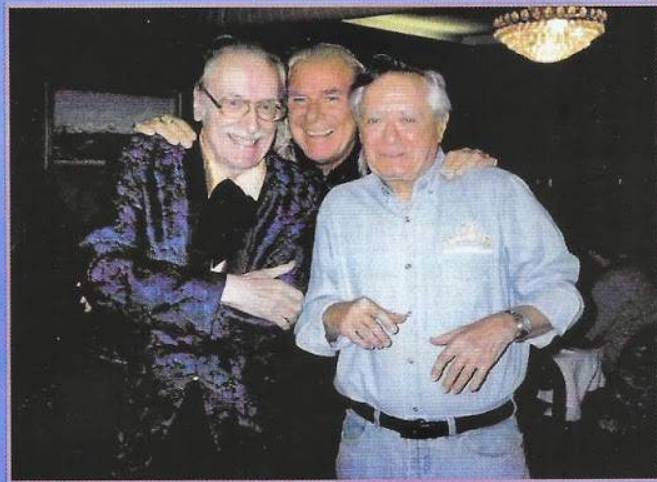
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—Zacherley





# the NEWS



# HOUND

Salutations, Scarlet Streeters! Welcome to The Hound's 50th folio of facts about future features, hot news in home video, and various bulletins that go bump in the night...

## Theatrical Thrills

Blazing into cinemas in April is **HELLBOY** (Columbia), based on the Dark Horse comic-book series about a centuries-old demon who fights the forces of supernatural evil for a secret government agency. Ron Perlman (**BEAUTY AND THE BEAST**) portrays the title role beneath makeup wizard Rick Baker's prosthetics. John Hurt and Selma Blair costar, and Guillermo del Toro directs.

Goran Visnjic (Dr. Luka Kovac of the TV series **ER**) stars in First Look Pictures' April release **HYPNOTIC**. He's a London hypnotherapist who receives telepathic flashes from his patients' minds, giving him clues toward solving a rash of serial killings. Also starring are Miranda Otto (**LORD OF THE RINGS**) and Fiona Shaw (**HARRY POTTER**).

Other April debuts: Quentin Tarantino delivers **KILL BILL, VOLUME 2** (Miramax), the conclusion to his hemorrhagic homage to Hong Kong actioners... **THE PUNISHER** (Artisan), a Marvel Comics adaptation by writer/director Jonathan Hensleigh, stars Thomas Jane (**DREAMCATCHER**) as armored vigilante Frank Castle. John Travolta, Laura Harring, and Will Patton costar.

Tentatively set for April is **SECRET WINDOW** (Columbia), a Stephen King adaptation from **STIR OF ECHOES** writer/director David Koepp. Johnny Depp stars as an author accused of plagiarism by a psychotic drifter (John Turturro)... In **GODSEND** (Lion's Gate), distraught young marrieds Greg Kinnear and Rebecca Romijn-Stamos seek to bring back their dead infant son through cloning—so they consult eccentric geneticist Dr. Robert DeNiro. When your doctor sports a mohawk and retractable scalpels, it's time for a second opinion.

In May, Warner Bros. presents the ancient sword-and-slaughter saga **TROY** from director Wolfgang Petersen (**THE PERFECT STORM**). Brad Pitt portrays the heroic Achilles, who ankles his native Greece to battle the well-protected Trojans, led by hunky Hector (ex-HULK Eric Bana). Meanwhile, a thousand or so watercraft are launched by the lovely face of German fashion model Diane Kruger, who plays Helen, the abducted queen of Sparta. Veterans Brian Cox, Julie Christie, and Peter O'Toole are also on hand as various Homeric personages.

Also arriving in May: **MUMMY** man Stephen Sommers' big-budget monster

rally **VAN HELSING** (Universal) stars occasional mutant and current Broadway star Hugh Jackman... Mike Myers and Eddie Murphy are back in vocal harness in DreamWorks' animated sequel **SHREK 2**, this time joined by Julie Andrews and John Cleese... **INDEPENDENCE DAY** director Roland Emmerich once again provides disaster on a planetary scale in **THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW** (20th Century Fox). Dennis Quaid and son Jake Gyllenhaal bond amid tidal waves, earthquakes, and other natural disasters caused—not by aliens—but by that pesky threat, global warming. Which is probably caused by aliens anyway...



**HOUSE OF DRACULA** (1945) at last makes its DVD debut as part of Universal's Legacy Collection.

## Upcoming Attractions

The heroes of Hogwarts return in June in **HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN**, the Warner Bros. adaptation of J. K. Rowling's third enchanted adventure. Gary Oldman joins the cast as the dreaded prisoner of the title... Kirsten Dunst and the late Richard Harris are among the voice talents in the French-produced computer-animated fantasy **KAENA: THE PROPHECY** (IDP Distribution), which features amazing photo-realistic characters and effects... Vin Diesel reprises his breakout role from 2000's sci-fi sleeper **PITCH BLACK** in **THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK** (Universal), from returning writer/director David Twohy... Clive Owen (**THE BOURNE IDENTITY**), Charlotte Rampling, and Malcolm McDowell star in the British thriller **I'LL SLEEP WHEN I'M DEAD** (Paramount Classics) from **CREDIT** director Mike Hodge.

More June offerings: **JEFFREY** and **ADDAMS FAMILY VALUES** scribe Paul Rudnick renders a blackly comic remake of **THE STEPFORD WIVES** (Paramount), starring Nicole Kidman, Matthew Broderick, Bette Midler, Glenn Close, Jon Lovitz, and Christopher Walk-

en... Disney adapts Jules Verne's classic **AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS** as a star vehicle for Jackie Chan, who's accompanied by an international cast that includes John Cleese, Kathy Bates, Jim Broadbent, and Chan's Hong Kong cronies Sammo Hung... Cartoonist Jim Davis' feline favorite **GARFIELD** comes to the big screen in a comedy from 20th Century Fox. Bill Murray provides the voice for the computer-generated fat cat, who's surrounded by the live bodies of Jennifer Love Hewitt, Debra Messing, and Alan Cumming.

In July, the elaborate musical biography **DE-LOVELY** (United Artists) comes to the screen, starring Kevin Kline as peerless songwriter Cole Porter. In director Irwin Winkler's biographical fantasy, Porter reviews the events of his life as if they were set pieces in one of his stage musicals. Ashley Judd, Jonathan Pryce, and recording stars Natalie Cole, Diana Krall, Elvis Costello, Sheryl Crow, and Mick Hucknall (of Simply Red) are among the cast.

Halle Berry brings star power galore to the title role of Warner's Bat-spinoff **CATWOMAN**, set to debut late July. Co-writers John Brancato and Michael Ferris (**TERMINATOR 3**) have created a new origin for the feline protagonist that has little relation to previous Catty incarnations. Sharon Stone, Benjamin Bratt, and Frances McDormand share billing with Berry under the direction of former French effects designer "Pitof" (helmer of the stylish 2001 Gallic fantasy **VIDOCQ**).

M. Night Shyamalan, creator of **THE SIXTH SENSE** and **SIGNS**, brings us his latest Pennsylvania-set creepfest, **THE VILLAGE** (Touchstone). No, we won't see Patrick McGooan battling any big weather balloons—but we will witness Joaquin Phoenix, Sigourney Weaver, and William Hurt being plagued by weird woodland creatures surrounding their late 19th-century farming community. In a typical Shyamalan final-reel twist ending, look for the late Leo McKern to appear as "Number Two." Or not.

## Future Features

Also debuting in July is Touchstone's historical drama **KING ARTHUR**, which eschews sword-in-the-stone fantasy for a more fact-based approach. Clive Owen, Keira Knightley (**PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN**), and Ioan Gruffudd (**HORATIO HORNBLLOWER**) star... **SPIDER-MAN 2** (Columbia) brings Tobey Maguire back as Marvel's webslinger Peter Parker, who does battle with the nefarious Dr. Octopus (Alfred Molina)... Alex Proyas

*Continued on page 20*

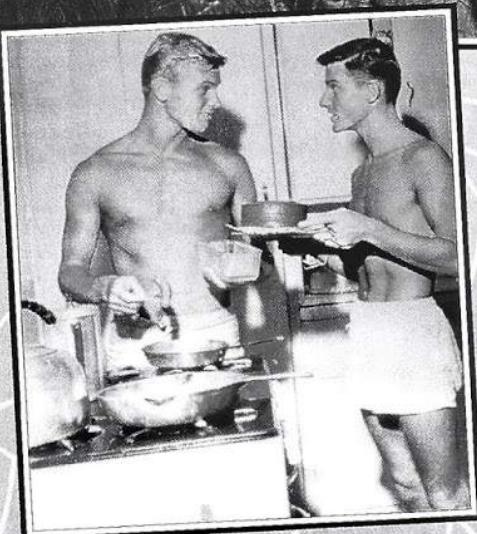




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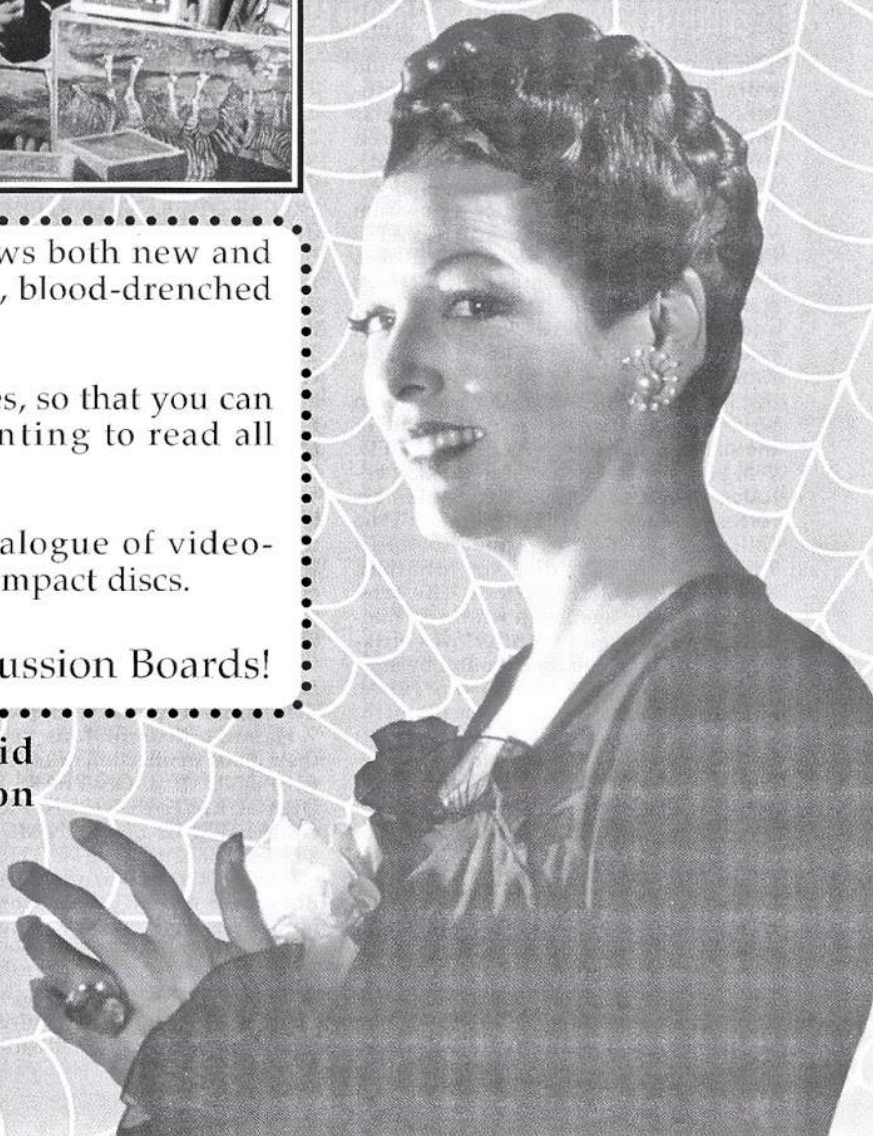
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## NEWS HOUND

Continued from page 18

(DARK CITY, THE CROW) directs I, ROBOT (20th Century Fox), an adaptation of Isaac Asimov's 1950 classic, which toplines Will Smith and James Cromwell... Matt Damon returns as Robert Ludlum's amnesiac assassin in THE BOURNE SUPREMACY (Universal), with Brian Cox and Joan Allen.

Tentatively scheduled for August release: a live-action update of the Supermarionation classic THUNDERBIRDS (Universal), starring Bill Paxton, Anthony Edwards, and Ben Kingsley; the sci-fi cage match ALIEN VS. PREDATOR (20th Century Fox); the New Line sequel BLADE: TRINITY, starring the returning Wesley Snipes as Marvel Comics' vampire hunter; and another monstrous Marvel adaptation: MAN-THING (Artisan), directed by VIRTUOSITY's Brett Leonard.

Sarah Michelle Gellar will follow her big-screen star turn in Warners' SCOOBY-DOO TOO: MONSTERS UNLEASHED with a Columbia horror film tentatively titled THE GRUDGE. She'll costar with fellow TV escapee Jason Behr (ROSWELL) in this Sam Raimi-produced remake of last year's Japanese shocker about a supernatural curse that kills by spreading like a virus from victim to victim.

### Déjà Views

The new, so-far-untitled BATMAN film from director Christopher Nolan (MENTO) is set to star Christian Bale as the Cowled One, along with rumored castmates Michael Caine (as Alfred), Viggo Mortensen, and Katie Holmes... Mel Brooks is set to produce a new film version of his 1967 side-splitter THE PRODUCERS—this time adapted from his smash Broadway musical version, starring original stage stars Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick. The Universal release is scheduled for 2005... Nicole Kidman sends noses (et cetera) a-twitching in the role of Samantha Stevens in writer/director Nora Ephron's update of the sixties television series BEWITCHED. Will Ferrell (ELF) is slated to portray befuddled spouse Darrin in the Columbia release... John Frankenheimer's 1966 chiller SECONDS is destined for a Paramount remake by director Jonathan Mostow (TERMINATOR 3). The tale, about a middle-aged man who buys himself a new face and identity, was strikingly visualized first time around by master cinematographer James Wong Howe, and eerily scored by Jerry Goldsmith. Catch it on Paramount DVD... Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 classic *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* may get a questionable incarnation courtesy of Dimension Films and reality-TV producer Mike Fleiss (THE BACHELOR)... Watch for super sci-fi sequels X-MEN 3 and STAR WARS EPISODE 3 (both from 20th Century Fox) to monopolize movie screens in the summer of 2005.

### The Home Video Vault

MPI's marvelous DVD release schedule of Sherlock Holmes classics starring Basil



Richard Valley's audio commentary examines this missing scene from THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES (1939).

Rathbone and Nigel Bruce concludes in April with the 1939 20th Century Fox features THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES and THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES. Each is available for \$19.95, and feature liner notes by *Scarlet Street's* Richard Valley—who also wrote and recorded a full-length commentary track for ADVENTURES. Holmes scholar David Stuart Davies—a frequent presence on the Street—does the narrative honors on HOUND.

After being unavailable for several years, Universal makes their golden-age classics available on DVD in a series of multidisc sets available in April called THE LEGACY COLLECTION. The three-disc FRANKENSTEIN set features the 1931 original, BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN, SON OF FRANKENSTEIN, THE GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN, and HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN. The two-disc DRACULA set is comprised of the Bela Lugosi classic and its Spanish-language twin, plus DRACULA'S DAUGHTER, SON OF DRACULA, and—making its DVD debut—HOUSE OF DRACULA. THE WOLF MAN two-disc package includes the aforementioned 1941 entry, along with WEREWOLF OF LONDON, FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLF MAN, and SHE-WOLF OF LONDON. Each set retails for under \$30.00.

The UK telefilm SHERLOCK: CASE OF EVIL caused some strongly worded reactions on *Scarlet Street's* internet forum when it was telecast last year. Fans can check out the Universal DVD (\$26.98) and judge this revisionist tale for themselves. James D'Arcy stars as a young, virile Holmes in pursuit of Professor Moriarty (Vincent D'Onofrio) as well as the charms of several young women.

Hammer Horror fans can beef up their bloody collection of DVDs this year with ONE MILLION YEARS B.C. (Fox), DRACULA HAS RISEN FROM THE GRAVE, FRANKENSTEIN MUST BE DESTROYED, and TASTE THE BLOOD OF DRACULA (Warner). TASTE THE BLOOD is reportedly the complete 95-minute version, till now unavailable on video in the States.

### More Video News

There's No Place Like Home Video! Five Judy Garland musical classics are set to

debut on DVD in April: FOR ME AND MY GAL, IN THE GOOD OLD SUMMERTIME, ZIEGFELD GIRL, LOVE FINDS ANDY HARDY, and a 60th Anniversary two-disc special edition of MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS, which features three documentaries and myriad rarities. These Warner releases can be collected for \$19.98 each; the ST. LOUIS set is \$26.99.

Scheduled for November from 20th Century Fox is the original STAR WARS trilogy—or, Episodes 4, 5 and 6, if you must—available as individual special editions. Mr. Lucas has reportedly made some tweaks and changes, as is his wont—one of which is a reported reshoot of the final unmasking in RETURN OF THE JEDI, replacing original deteriorating Darth Vader performer Sebastian Shaw with a newly made-up Hayden Christensen as Anakin the mannequin.

Scuttlebutt has Warner Home Video planning to release two-disc special editions of FORBIDDEN PLANET and KING KONG later this year. Other rumored Warner releases include a trio of baby boomer cartoon classics on DVD: first season sets of THE FLINTSTONES and THE JETSONS, and the complete series of the original JONNY QUEST. Be on the lookout late this year or early next.

Home video availability and release dates are notoriously changeable, so consult your local video store for the latest info.

### Music, Monsters, Please

Collectors of film scores have had a field day recently with CD releases of Bernard Herrmann's THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL (Varese Sarabande), Basil Kirchin's THE ABOMINABLE DR. PHIBES and John Gale's DR. PHIBES RISES AGAIN (Prometheus Records), Jerry Goldsmith's POLTERGEIST II (Varese), Jerry Fielding's SOYLENT GREEN/DEMON SEED (Film Score Monthly), Vic Mizzy's THE SPIRIT IS WILLING/THE BUSY BODY (Percepto), and Barry Gray's THUNDERBIRDS and CAPTAIN SCARLET (Silva).

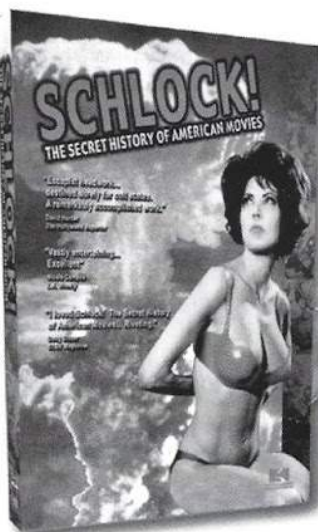
The independent UK label Chandos Records offers several discs of interest to genre fans. THE TV THEMES OF NIGEL HESS features the main title compositions for the British mystery shows CAMPION, MAIGRET, and HETTY WAINTHROPP INVESTIGATES, among others. THE FILM MUSIC OF GEORGES AURIC features suites from DEAD OF NIGHT, FATHER BROWN (aka THE DETECTIVE), and THE INNOCENTS, as well as other UK classics from the forties and fifties. These catalog titles can be ordered from import retailers or directly from the manufacturer.

And don't forget the monstrously entertaining *Scarlet Street* production JEEPERS CREEPERS: GREAT SONGS FROM HORROR MOVIES, featuring the cream of the Broadway crop—plus horror icon Zacherley—warbling your favorite tunes from famous (and infamous) fright flicks. It's available now from [www.scarletstreet.com](http://www.scarletstreet.com).



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### Tourism of Terror

International Tours and Events offers globetrotting terror fans a new summer edition of their well-known Dracula Tour to Transylvania, taking flight (not via bat) July 11-18, 2004. For more info about this eight-day vampiric voyage—as well as their June 2004 GHOSTour to England and their Halloween 2004 Dracula Tour—visit [www.toursandevents.com](http://www.toursandevents.com) or call 203-795-4737.

For those who seek even more danger in their horror-themed holidays, the US military invites you to sunny Iraq for "The Exorcist Experience." Iraqi locals serve as tour guides of the 2,000-year-old city of Hatra, where the opening sequences of THE EXORCIST show Max von Sydow unearthing the demon Pazuzu. Vacationing horror fans with the urge to recreate Father Merrin's excavatory activities will have better luck digging up demons than those elusive WMDs.

### Ghoulish Graphics

Remember that classic 1940s Universal horror film that featured World War I soldiers encountering the Frankenstein monster and his cronies? No? Well, Image Comics presents just such a tale in graphic novel form with the March publication of THE BLACK FOREST. The monsterrific tale of vampires, werewolves, and the undead amid war-torn 1914 Europe is illustrated in rich black-and-white (of course) by Neil Vokes (SUPERMAN ADVENTURES) and coscripted by Scarlet Street staffer Todd Livingston and feature film writer/director Robert Tinnell (FRANKENSTEIN

AND ME). The 100-page volume is available for \$9.95 at bookstores and comic shops starting March 31.

Isn't that exciting! The artist/writer team of Vokes and Tinnell also contribute to a scarily special comics collection: ZACHERLEY'S MIDNITE TERRORS. The legendary Cool Ghoul (in graphics form) introduces six illustrated tales, "Crypt Keeper" style, in this anthology published by Chanting Monks Studios. Famed Famous Monsters artist Basil Gogos created the cover art for the volume, which can be purchased through Zacherley's official website, [www.zacherley.com](http://www.zacherley.com).

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Gone, but never to be forgotten: Fleischer Studios SUPERMAN screenwriter Jay Morton; comedian/TV host Bob Monkhouse; TV executive and producer Ethel Winant; film critic Bill Kelley; broadcaster Roy Neal; photographer Francesco Scavullo; singers Johnny Cash, Bobby Hatfield, Tony Jackson (The Searchers), Gisele MacKenzie, Robert Palmer, Dick St. John (Dick & Dee Dee), Sheb Wooley, and Warren ("Werewolves of London") Zevon; playwright Herb Gardner; theatrical producer Jenifer Estes; authors Joan Aiken, John Gregory Dunne, George Plimpton, Edward Jablonski, and David Stern; special effects artists Wah Chang and Frank H. Isaacs; animators Jules Engel and Kevin Oakley; composers Michael Kamen and Michael Small; cinematographer Brianne Murphy; TV scripters Margaret Armen, Marion Hargrove, and Joanna Lee; screenwriters Mark Hanna and Edmund Hartmann; producer/writers

John Hawkesworth and Jack Pollexfen; producers Lewis M. Allen, Robert Guenette, Bernard Schwartz, Ray Stark, and Christopher Seiter; directors Earl Bellamy, Brian Gibson, Donald G. Jackson, Elia Kazan, Leni Riefenstahl, and Jack Smight; and actors Robert Addie, Hy Anzell, Ben Aris, Sir Alan Bates, Fred "Rerun" Berry, Lyle Bettger, Jonathan Brandis, Sheila Bromley, Charles Bronson, Rand Brooks, Robert Brown (007's "M"), Patricia Burke, Norman Burton, Art Carney, Constance Chapman, Jeanne Crain, Ed Devereaux, Ellen Drew, Jack Elam, Stanley Fafara, Jinx Falkenburg, Dorothy Fay, Jacques François, Philip Gilbert, Vic Gordon, Uta Hagen, Ruth Hall, Elizabeth Harrower, Fay Helm, David Hemmings, Earl Hindman, Gregory Hines, Victoria Horne, Larry Hovis, Alexis Kanner, Gordon Jump, Helen Kleebe, Dinsdale Landen, Hope Lange, Terry Lester, David Lodge, Dorothy Loudon, Lynn Mathis, Sean McClory, Sydney Miller, Gordon Mitchell, Etta Moten (Barnett), Ron O'Neal, Julie Parrish, William Paterson, Louise Platt, Denis Quilley, Andrew Ray, Gene Anthony Ray, Paula Raymond, Gordon Reid, Madlyn Rhue, John Ritter, Rex Robbins, Matt Roe, Guy Rolfe, Billy Roy, Janice Rule, William Sargent, Penny Singleton, Edna Skinner, Florence Stanley, Ingrid Thulin, Les Tremayne, Marie Trintignant, Zena Walker, Kellie Waymire, Chili Williams, Lesley Woods, and musical icons Ann Miller and Donald O'Connor.



Send The Hound your questions, comments and compliments via email to [TheNewsHound@scarletstreet.com](mailto:TheNewsHound@scarletstreet.com).



# SCREEN...



# and Screen AGAIN!



## Scarlet Street's DVD Reviews

**THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS**

**THE VALLEY OF GWANGI**

**THE BLACK SCORPION**

Warner Home Video—\$19.99 each

**THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS** (1953) established one of the great sci-fi archetypes of the fifties—the prehistoric-beast-returned-to-life-and-ticked-off-about-it story. Like other trend-setting pictures, including 1951's **THE THING** (the original invaders-from-space yarn) and 1954's **THEM!** (the initial big-bug epic), **FATHOMS** is an essential, definitive work and a must for any serious student of the genre. It's also one heck of a fun flick. Generally speaking, the sci-fi classics from the early fifties were better funded and treated with greater respect by all involved than those made later in the cycle. **FATHOMS**, for instance, offers a capable cast, well-developed characters, and an engrossing 79-minute narrative, instead of cardboard stereotypes and by-rote plot points. Despite its many other strengths, however, the film is probably best remembered as the solo feature film debut of master animator Ray Harryhausen, who contributes sequences that would prove among the most durable and iconic of the decade

(such as the sight of the beast gobbling up an unfortunate traffic cop).

Warner Bros. has transferred the film from a luminous, razor-sharp fine grain print. Aside from a few barely noticeable speckles and a single jump cut (in a dialogue scene), the presentation is blemish free. The original mono sound is as clear and bold as can be expected. The bonus features prove somewhat disappointing, however. The making-of documentary is all too brief (less than 10 minutes). And **HARRYHAUSEN AND BRADBURY: AN UNFATHOMABLE FRIENDSHIP** turns out to be videotape of these two beloved old coots sitting in front of a studio audience reminiscing about the good old days and their long-standing camaraderie.

**THE VALLEY OF GWANGI** (1969), while not a sci-fi landmark like **FATHOMS**, remains an enormously entertaining film. It may be Harryhausen's most underappreciated picture. James Franciscus and Richard Carlson headline the film's likeable cast. The characters are better defined than in most Harryhausen movies, and the scenario includes some compelling subplots, so the dramatic tension is not limited to the f/x sequences. Of course, establishing characters and setting subplots in motion takes time, and **GWANGI** runs a shade long at 95 minutes. Even so, the story moves briskly, especially in its second half. Like **FATHOMS**, **GWANGI** includes some of Harryhausen's most arresting sequences, including the justly famous scene in which cowboys lasso the allosaurus, Gwangi.

Warner Bros. located an eye-popping, widescreen print with vivid colors and clear mono sound, then transferred it expertly. A few speckles aside, this is a superb-looking disc. The bonus features are also impressive. Harryhausen covers the production history of

**GWANGI**, while ILM artists discuss the impact **GWANGI** had on **JURASSIC PARK** (1993). This may not be the best film of this trio, but it's the best DVD.

A cliché-riddled script prevents **THE BLACK SCORPION** (1957) from being either truly classic like **FATHOMS** or an underrated gem like **GWANGI**. Nevertheless, **SCORPION** remains one of the better big bug pictures (although **THEM!** and 1955's **TARANTULA** easily outclass it). Despite the presence of genre faves Richard Denning and Mara Corday, there's not much of interest beyond the animation sequences from the great Willis O'Brien. Unfortunately, the stop-motion f/x were done on the cheap and look it. DVD clarity only makes their limitations more apparent. Still, there are some spectacular moments, such as the giant scorpions' attack on a passenger train, and a lengthy sequence set in a subterranean cavern. Those scenes make the film worth the effort, especially since, at a brisk 88 minutes, it never outstays its welcome.

The source print for **SCORPION** is in far poorer shape than **FATHOMS** or **GWANGI**, showing a fair amount of speckling, dirt, and other blemishes, but remains better than acceptable. The focus is sharp, the gray scale is distinct, and the blacks are firm. The sound is decent. **SCORPION**'s bonus features begin with **STOP MOTION MASTERS**, a ridiculously brief (just three minutes) interview with Harryhausen, who discusses working with Willis O'Brien. Of considerably greater interest is some fascinating test footage from two unproduced projects (about 12 minutes worth) shot by O'Brien protege Pete Peterson. Also included is Harryhausen's complete, 16-minute prehistory sequence from Irwin Allen's 1955 film **THE ANIMAL WORLD**, including an onscreen intro from Harryhausen. These final two featurettes give **SCORPION**, by far, the most interesting bonus materials of the three discs.

—Mark Clark

**THE MARILYN MONROE**

**DIAMOND COLLECTION II**

20th Century Fox Home Video—\$79.98

Marilyn's back, and look who's got her—Richard Widmark, Cary Grant, Joseph Cotten, Robert Mitchum, and Yves Montand, to name a few of the illustrious costars featured in Fox Home Video's second salute to their incandescent icon, Marilyn Monroe. It is indeed quite a tribute to Monroe's talent that she effectively holds her own against such costars, and that Fox has meticulously restored these five films and made them available to future (and past) Monroe idolatrists. This second set is nothing if not eclectic. From the nerve-wracking tension of **DON'T BOTHER TO KNOCK** (1952) to the surefire sensuality of **LET'S MAKE LOVE** (1960), this sparkling showcase places the emphasis on the dramatic rather than comedic aspects of Monroe's craft, with only two flat-out comedies represented.





In Howard Hawks' *MONKEY BUSINESS* (1952), Marilyn is merely a supporting player, second-fiddling to top-billed Cary Grant and Ginger Rogers. *MONKEY BUSINESS* is a screwball comedy centering on the discovery of a youth-inducing serum discovered by stuffy chemist Barnaby Fulton (Grant, nearly reprising his 1938 *BRINGING UP BABY* character). It's a precious endeavor, sure-handedly directed by Hawks, but by no means a genre classic. Fulton taking a spin with sexy secretary Lois



Laurel (Monroe) is the film's central centerpiece and both actors are game without going over the top.

*DON'T BOTHER TO KNOCK* might be the strangest film in the Monroe canon. A disturbed young woman fresh from a mental hospital, Nell Forbes is a quiet study in desperation, and Monroe is chillingly realistic in her portrayal. There are foreshadowings of Hitchcock's *REAR WINDOW* (1954) when pilot Jed Towers (Richard Widmark) sets his sights on Nell, the babysitter he spies across the hotel courtyard. This thriller marked the inauspicious film debut of Ann Bancroft as lounge singer Lyn Lesley; she is obviously dubbed, and her microphone holding skills are quite radical. Elisha Cook Jr. adds a touch of *film noir* authenticity to the proceedings. Marilyn's 12th film certainly took her in a new direction, proving to herself and to her critics that she was a competent dramatic actress. When Nell's hand gently caresses her charge's back, and she murmurs caressingly, "You won't cry anymore..." even the doubters of Monroe's talents should be convinced.

Playing actress Amanda Dell in George Cukor's CinemaScope comedy *LET'S MAKE LOVE*, Monroe is allowed to poke fun at her image. Amanda is starring in a downtown revue, satirizing the newsmakers of the day, one of whom—a French steel magnate played by Yves Montand—decides to join the cast in an effort to keep himself from being parodied. Montand and Monroe strike sparks, but it's Marilyn's sizzling rendi-

tion of Cole Porter's "My Heart Belongs to Daddy" and the parade of guest stars (Bing Crosby, Milton Berle, and Gene Kelly) that make *LOVE* memorable.

CinemaScope is the chief asset of *RIVER OF NO RETURN*, wherein saloon girl Kay Weston (Monroe) is the object of the carnality of both farmer Matt Calder (Robert Mitchum) and gambler Harry Weston (Rory Calhoun). Kay puts her maternal instincts to use with Matt's son, Mark (Tommy Rettig, who proved himself quite a natural child performer).

The collection's major asset is the appearance (finally) of Henry Hathaway's *NIAGARA* (1953). This Technicolor *noir* classic presents Monroe in one of her finest characterizations, the conniving Rose Loomis, who seeks to murder husband George Loomis (Joseph Cotten) and run off with her lover (Richard Allan). Rose is head and shoulders above Monroe's other characterizations presented in this collection. Monroe is sultry and steamy, edgy and perfectly frightening. This tight, taut thriller has certainly lost none of its impact after 50 years. The cinematography truly shines on DVD, thanks to the careful restoration done from the original film negative.

*THE DIAMOND COLLECTION II* has been painstakingly restored from camera negatives and offer up side-by-side comparisons with older releases. Original theatrical trailers are presented. There are still 17 Monroe film performances waiting to be released on DVD, from the uncredited *THE SHOCKING MISS PILGRIM* (1947) to the omnibus *O. HENRY'S FULL HOUSE* (1952), but with FOX's splendid work on *THE DIAMOND COLLECTION(S)*, Monroe mavens will undoubtedly find satisfaction.

—Anthony Dale

#### SCHLOCK!

*Pathfinder*—\$19.98

The Production Code of the 1930s meant that the major studios had to steer clear of subjects concerning sex, drugs and graphic violence. Indie producers saw a chance to exploit these taboo subjects, and make quick money on small investments. *SCHLOCK! THE SECRET HISTORY OF AMERICAN MOVIES* (2001) is a loving study of these exploitation films and filmmakers. The films were often technically below par, but had a raw energy that major films seldom matched.

Such familiar titles as *REEFER MADNESS* (1938), *I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF* (1957), and *BLOOD FEAST* (1963) are trotted out, along with a wealth of info on the evolution of nudie cutie movies. It's surprising to learn how early nudity was depicted on the screen, and fascinating to see how films progressed from silly nudist camp films to such major Hollywood productions as *MIDNIGHT COWBOY* (1969) once restrictions were relaxed. (Indeed, how could the low-budget producers compete when the big guys were doing the same type of movie with bigger stars and slicker production values?)

Interviews with Forrest J Ackerman, Roger Corman, Sam Arkoff, Doris Wishman, Peter Bogdanovich, Maila (Vampira) Nurmi, and Dick Miller each give an insiders point of view on those not so golden years. Included on this must-have DVD are a bizarre nuclear propaganda short, unreleased music tracks, an exploitation art gallery, and an informative audio commentary with director Ray Greene and coproducer Wade Major. And where else are you going to find footage of the 1999 stage show *REEFER MADNESS: THE MUSICAL*?

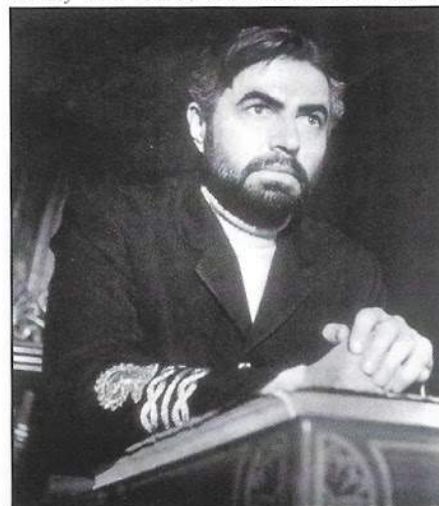
—Kevin G. Shinnick

#### 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA

Walt Disney Home Video—\$29.95

Like the holds of Captain Nemo's Nautilus, there's a lot of treasure to be found in this two-DVD set, arriving with a teeming school of extras. The 1954 film itself, based on Jules Verne's 1870 novel, is one of the best science fiction movies ever made, which automatically makes this an essential purchase for the sci-fi fan, as well as the Disney buff.

Doubtless, the story is familiar to you. Captain Nemo (the flawless James Mason) takes it upon himself to end war on the high seas, and to live a utopian existence beneath the waves. When Ned Land and his compatriots (Kirk Douglas, Peter Lorre, and Paul Lukas, all as perfectly cast as Mason) come on board, they're taken on a guided tour of the wonders and dangers of the deep seas, as well as the Nautilus herself (a brilliantly designed, claustrophobic Victorian marvel). As with Verne's book, the submarine functions as the movie's leading lady, every steel bulkhead, gauge, and rivet of her as lovingly realized as the rest of the picture. Our heroes are, to say the least, horrified at Nemo's



tendency to sink ships with all hands aboard, however. Oh, well, so much for utopia...

Still one of Walt Disney's most ambitious forays into live-action features, *20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA* is brought to DVD with a flawless widescreen Technicolor transfer and cleaned-up THX-certified sound. Unlike Verne's



sometimes ponderous novel, the movie is fast paced under Richard Fleisher's direction, taking the viewer breathlessly from wonder to wonder. The tone is far more genial than the novel; Kirk Douglas actually gets to sing a nifty sea shanty!

After you've seen the movie, you'll want to investigate the marvelous bonus features. And there are a lot of faces familiar to Scarlet Streeters in these; Forry Ackerman, Bob Burns, and writers Gregory Benford and Samuel Delany put the movie into historical perspective, and treat the movie as serious science fiction. There's also a trailer, a rejected sequence of the giant squid attack (which is actually better than 90% of the special effects other sci-fi movies had at the time, but still not good enough for Uncle Walt), some deleted animation sequences, a great (if overdue) tribute to Disney composer Paul Smith, storyboards, radio spots, and on and on. One of the new disappointments is the commentary track, which has the great Rudy Behlmer coaxing Richard Fleisher (who would later direct another sci-fi submarine feature, 1966's *FANTASTIC VOYAGE*) to reminisce.

If there's a downside to all this booty, it's the fact that there's so much of it spread out over the two DVDs, finding it via the onscreen menus is a bit confusing at times. But wading through it all is a pure delight—I swear by my tattoo!

—Robin Anderson

#### MYSTERIOUS ISLAND

Columbia Tristar Home Entertainment—\$19.95

After that ultimate kiddie matinee, *THE 7TH VOYAGE OF SINBAD* (1958), Ray Harryhausen and producer Charles Schnee explored somewhat more mature territory for several films. While both men were clever enough not to entirely foreshadow the elements that would draw in the kids, their scripts featured more intelligent dialogue and deeper characterizations, reaching an apex with *JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS* (1963) and *FIRST MEN IN THE MOON* (1964).

*MYSTERIOUS ISLAND* (1961) doesn't quite reach those heights, because its final screenplay never successfully commingles the various alterations it went through in attempting to marry Dymation with Jules Verne's version of Robinson Crusoe—as witness the appearance of a prehistoric bird among the gigantized critters, and a submerged, apparently Egyptian, city relegated to little more than a backdrop. Early drafts featured more prehistoric animals and a more prominent role for the city of Lemuria, but only these vestiges remain, and they're never integrated by so much as a cursory explanation.

The film begins well, with an exciting escape by balloon of Northern POWs from a Southern prison during the Civil War. Though it features none of the animation effects that Harryhausen is famous for, it's one of the most thrilling sequences in his oeuvre, aided greatly by



some of Bernard Herrmann's best music for a Harryhausen film. (The title theme is also stunning.) Blown by a raging thunderstorm, the erstwhile prisoners end up on a Pacific island where they are soon joined by two female shipwreck survivors. Minor mysteries accumulate—as well as encounters with a giant crab and an equally oversize bee—and the castaways soon come to realize they are not the only humans on the island.

The script is too chockablock to build to a satisfactory conclusion, which makes Harryhausen's sequences stand out as set pieces even more than usual. It does manage a slow and believable transition from the highly realistic opening scenes to the high fantasy ones. A strong cast, including Michael Craig, Joan Greenwood, Gary Merrill, Dan Jackson (in a far stronger role for a black man than was usual at the time) Percy Herbert, and Herbert Lom (as Captain Nemo) ease viewers over many trouble spots.

The Dymation effects are up to Harryhausen's usual standards—the sequence with the giant crab is particularly impressive—but the more prosaic nature of many of the beasts has caused the film to be held in lower regard than his more colorful fantasies. Though the effects are not quite as successfully integrated into the fabric as in the later films, they are less “the whole show” than many earlier efforts and that makes for a better movie overall.

The presentation seems slightly overmatted and the color a bit muddy at times, but otherwise *MYSTERIOUS ISLAND* looks terrific. The extras include *THE HARRYHAUSEN CHRONICLES* (of course), trailers, and an interview with Harryhausen on the making of the film.

—Harry H. Long

#### THEY DRIVE BY NIGHT HIGH SIERRA TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT DARK PASSAGE

Warner Home Video—\$19.98 each

Those interested in charting the career of Humphrey Bogart—and, for that matter, Ida Lupino and Lauren Bacall—will do well to pick up these Warner Bros. DVD releases. They reveal Bogie on the brink of stardom (in 1940's *THEY DRIVE BY NIGHT*), achieving it (in 1941's *HIGH SIERRA*), encountering his most famous costar for the first time (in 1944's *TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT*), and appearing more or less in support of

that famous costar for their third film together (in 1947's *DARK PASSAGE*).

Bogart is merely one of four luminaries in Raoul Walsh's *THEY DRIVE BY NIGHT*—the others are George Raft, Ann Sheridan, and Ida Lupino—and receives less exposure time than the others. Nevertheless, when he's onscreen with the top-billed Raft, it's Bogie you watch. The tough guys play brother truckers Joe and Paul Fabrini. Joe (Raft) is the one with the drive; Paul (Bogart) would rather sleep or spend time with his wife, Pearl (Gale Page). When Paul loses an arm in a crash, he gets his wish, and Bogart all but vanishes from the rest of the picture. Perhaps it's just as well, because at this point *THEY DRIVE BY NIGHT* becomes a vehicle of a different stripe—it's virtually a remake of *BORDERTOWN* (1935), with Ida Lupino in the role originally played by Bette Davis. Lupino wipes the competition off the screen in a genuinely chilling performance as Lana Carlsen, who falls for Joe, murders her husband (Alan Hale), and descends into madness. Ann Sheridan has a few tart moments as Joe's true love, but even so deft an actress is no match for Hurricane Ida.



Bogart got his big break the following year, in the role of Roy “Mad Dog” Earle in Walsh's *HIGH SIERRA*, but—thanks to Lupino's spectacular showing in *THEY DRIVE BY NIGHT*—was second-billed. Still, it's his film and Lupino, who not only knew when to take the bull by the horns, but was also a generous performer, doesn't try to steal it. “Mad Dog” is something of a gentle gangster; he doesn't break out of prison, but has to be freed by an associate (Donald McBride) who requires his services, and he harbors a sentimental love for a young crippled girl (Joan Leslie) who doesn't return his affection. The moral ambiguity of the lead character suits Bogart to perfection and paved the way for superstardom as Sam Spade in *THE MALTESE FALCON* (1941) and Rick Blaine in *CASABLANCA* (1942).

Bogie met Baby in *TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT* when Howard Hawks signed



Lauren Bacall to a contract, cast the young model in her first film, fashioned her into the quintessential Hawks woman, and named the character "Slim" after his wife. The story—with Bogart as Harry Morgan, a skipper who reluctantly becomes involved with World War II resistance fighters—is ever so loosely based on Ernest Hemingway's 1937 novel, but has more in common with *CASABLANCA*, though Harry's pal is not the piano-playing Sam (Dooley Wilson) of the earlier film, but the drunken, simpleminded Eddie (Walter Brennan). All else fades, though, when Bacall teaches Bogie how to whistle.

Delmer Daves' *DARK PASSAGE* is considered the least of the Bogart/Bacall teamings, perhaps underservedly so. The main problem for Bogie devotees is that their hero doesn't exactly appear in the picture's first third. Oh, he's there, all right—as escaped, falsely accused "killer" Vincent Parry—but until Parry undergoes plastic surgery at the hands of Doc Coley (Houseley Stevenson) and has the bandages removed by the sympathetic Irene Jansen (Bacall), the film is shot entirely from his point of view and we only hear Bogart, never see him. Still, it's a well-crafted film, both stars are in top form, and able support is provided by Bruce Bennett, Tom D'Andrea, Clifton Young, and an especially venomous Agnes Moorehead.

Warner Home Video includes some welcome extras with these releases. *THEY DRIVE BY NIGHT* includes a "making of" featurette titled *DIVIDED HIGHWAY: THE STORY OF THEY DRIVE BY NIGHT* and the short subject *SWING-TIME IN THE MOVIES* (1938). The *HIGH SIERRA* featurette is titled *CURTAINS FOR ROY EARLE*. The title *A LOVE STORY: THE STORY OF TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT* tells the whole tale for the *TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT* disc, which also features the Warner Bros' cartoon takeoff *BACALL TO ARMS* (1946). *DARK PASSAGE*'s extras include the featurette *HOLD YOUR BREATH AND CROSS YOUR FINGERS* and the 1947 Bugs Bunny cartoon *SLICK HARE*.

—Richard Valley

#### THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER

The Criterion Collection—\$39.95

William Dieterle's 1941 fantasy *THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER* (aka *ALL THAT MONEY CAN BUY*) has long been considered a minor classic. With the Criterion Collection's masterful restoration, derived from Dieterle's own clear print, it deserves reevaluation as a major classic and required viewing for film buffs. The especially insightful commentary by Bruce Eder that has been updated for this release conveys a wealth of information and, coupled with Bernard Herrmann biographer Steven C. Smith's comments, amounts to a complete and welcome tutorial on this most interesting of RKO films. There is even a comparison sequence showing several instances of the differences of the

original preview, under the title *HERE IS A MAN*, and the final version.

Eder points out that, unless you're around 70, you've never had the opportunity to see this fascinating film in its entirety. The difference between this presentation and the earlier laserdisc version is astounding. The black-and-white palette is extraordinary in its detail, and while the Overture is still sadly missing, the rest of Bernard Herrmann's score is heard in all its subtle beauty.

Is Walter Huston America's greatest actor? A case could be made for it and



you'll find his personal history as an actor an unusual one. It's hard to imagine either Claude Rains or Paul Muni (great actors both, who were also considered for the role of Mr. Scratch) equaling Huston's masterful rendition. His Devil is folksy, humorous, but always dangerous. Edward Arnold has perhaps his greatest role as Daniel Webster. Thomas Mitchell originally played this role, but he was injured during the filming of one of the "lost" sequences now restored and fractured his skull, necessitating his replacement. Arnold replaced him on short notice and none of the strain shows; it's an excellent portrayal. Both Anne Shirley and James Craig, now with their most intimate scenes restored, give subtle and impassioned performances that add considerable poignancy to Dan Tothoroh's excellent script, cowritten with the author of the source short story, Stephen Vincent Benet.

For Scarlet Streeters, perhaps the film's greatest appeal is the appearance of Simone Simon of *CAT PEOPLE* (1942) fame. Her appearance as Belle, sent by the Devil to seduce Jabez Stone (James Craig), was considered rather daring at the time. Her own special allure is still entrancing. John Qualen, often in John Ford productions, is quite good in an almost silent role as Miser Stevens, one of Mr. Scratch's other damned souls. Also giving fine support are Jane Darwell, Gene Lockhart, and H. B. Warner.

Bernard Herrmann won his only Oscar for this film and it is one of his richest

and rewarding scores, echoing his friend Charles Ives and featuring a *tour de force* violin square dance accompaniment for Mr. Scratch. Mention should be made of Joseph August's haunting photography, now seen in its original deep contrasts of light and shadow. The special effects and optical printer work by Vernon L. Walker and Linwood Dunn are still amazingly effective 50 years later.

In production at one of the most experimental times in RKO history, hot on the heels of *CITIZEN KANE* (1941) and just before *THE MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS* (1942) and Val Lewton's groundbreaking series of horror films, *THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER* should be on everyone's must-see list.

While a bit pricey, the DVD is worth every penny to see a treasure like this restored. Special features include a reading of the original tale by actor/director Alec Baldwin (who produced a recent refilming with Jennifer Love Hewitt in Walter Huston's role), several radio dramatizations of Benet's short stories (a couple of which also bear scores by Herrmann), and a gallery of photos and original ad art. Criterion has done not only film buffs a great service in restoring this classic to us; it has given America back a National Treasure.

—Farnham Scott

#### IN A LONELY PLACE

Columbia Tristar Home Entertainment—\$24.95

Humphrey Bogart stars as Dixon Steele, an out-of-work screenwriter with a violent streak brimming just under the surface. He's the main suspect in the murder of hatcheck girl Mildred Atkinson (Martha Stewart). Dix had taken Mildred home to summarize a novel he was offered to adapt for the screen, but later that night her corpse was discovered alongside a road. His only alibi is an almost complete stranger—Laurel Gray (Gloria Grahame), fellow resident in his apartment building. Meeting, the two fall quickly into love.



The affair runs smoothly at first, with Dix writing his script and Laurel assisting. After being warned about the violence lurking beneath Dix's suave surface by both Police Captain Lochner (Carl Benton Reid) and friend Martha (Ruth

Continued on page 74



# THE GREAT CHAN BAN



by Ken Hanke

*"For he knew now that Charlie Chan had not called him on the telephone. It came to him belatedly that the voice was never Charlie's. 'You savvy locality?' the voice had said. A clumsy attempt at Chan's style, but Chan was a student of English; he dragged his words painfully from the poets; he was careful to use nothing that savored of 'pidgin.'"*

—Earl Derr Biggers,  
The House Without a Key (1925)

Who could have guessed, when Fox Movie Channel announced that they were undertaking a Charlie Chan festival of restored prints of the series produced from 1931 through 1942, that they were setting off what would quickly become the big issue in film fandom for 2003.

Considering that it hadn't been all that long since American Movie Classics had run a similar festival, and that Turner Classic Movies occasionally still runs the later, Monogram-produced Charlie Chan movies in their library, and that Fox itself ran a similar festival as recently as 2001, there was simply no reason anyone should have expected that such an announcement would be of much interest to any but a handful of movie and mystery buffs. And that seemed to be the case . . . for a time. Then FMC suddenly canceled the series, issuing a statement that read in part:

"Fox Movie Channel has been made aware that the Charlie Chan films may contain situations or depictions that are sensitive to some viewers. Fox Movie Channel realizes that these historic films were produced at a time where racial sensitivities were not as they are today. As a result of the public response to the airing of these films, Fox Movie Channel will remove them from the schedule."

What had happened? The combined efforts of the NAPALC (National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium) and the NAATA (National Asian American Telecommunications Association) had resulted in a letter-writing campaign to have the films banned from the cable channel. The move was quickly applauded by the OCA (Organization of Chinese Americans). The idea, of course, was that the movies were racist and offensive to Asian Americans.

Fox Movie Channel's official statement was that the anti-Chan letters far outweighed the pro. Not surprising, that—who even knew that there was an issue at hand until the films had already been canceled? Once the issue became known, movie fans—in keeping with FMC's suggestion that viewers write in with their thoughts on the matter—bombarded the cable channel with letters, phone calls, and E-mails. Suddenly, the issue wasn't quite so clear-cut and it became a cause celebre—something I first became aware of when I was contacted (as author of 1989's *Charlie Chan at the Movies*) by *USA Today* for a statement.

Following the *USA Today* piece, FMC was quoted as claiming that the Charlie Chan films presented Caucasian actors in "yellow facepaint" wearing "buck teeth." This is simply not true. Fox's statement was perhaps "inspired" by OCA's Communications Director, Eleanor Lee, who originally commented that Asians at the time of the Charlie Chan movies "were inaccurately depicted by Caucasian actors, who wore face paint to act out stereotypical images of Asians as slanted eye, buck toothed, subservient, and non-English speaking. To recast Charlie Chan at this time and age would be completely inappropriate." It's not an unfair assessment of some movies of the same era, but as concerns the Chan movies, Lee's statement is as inaccurate as the depiction she deplores.

A quick tour of the NAPALC and NAATA websites in July 2003 revealed similar misrepresentations. NAPALC—along with linking the reader to Robert B. Ito's inflammatory article for *Bright Lights* magazine, "A Certain Slant: A Brief History of Hollywood Yellowface," which





PAGE 26: Charlie Chan (Warner Oland) and son Lee (Keye Luke) investigate murder for 20th Century Fox. LEFT: The Chan series has faced charges of racism for decades, if not for its treatment of its Asian characters, then for its depiction of black stereotypes portrayed by Stepin Fetchit (in 1935's *CHARLIE CHAN IN EGYPT*, with Oland and Thomas Beck) and (BOTTOM RIGHT) Mantan Moreland (as series regular Birmingham Brown). RIGHT: The Chan films always took pains to show family devotion, as in this scene from *CHARLIE CHAN'S MURDER CRUISE* (1940), with Victor Sen Yung as Jimmy Chan, Sidney Toler as Charlie Chan, and Layne Tom Jr. as Willie Chan.

only touches on Charlie Chan in passing—presents an alarming series of “facts” about the Charlie Chan movies. According to the NAPALC, Charlie is “portrayed as an asexual, servile man, inscrutable and mysterious.” A man with 14 children is hardly asexual. As for the image of Charlie as subservient, one need look no further than the second film in the series, *THE BLACK CAMEL* (1931), in which Charlie loses his temper with a roomful of white suspects and warns them, “I am not in mood tonight to turn the other cheek, but will return assault with compound battery.”

The racial aspect of Charlie was always addressed by both the films and the Earl Derr Biggers source novels. In the very first Biggers novel, 1925's *The House Without a Key*, Charlie is no sooner introduced than he encounters the implicit racism in a character he has come to help, prompting him to remark, “Humbly asking pardon to mention it. I detect in your eyes slight flame of hostility. Quench it, if you will be so kind. Friendly cooperation are essential between us.” Similarly, the movies’ Charlie is no stranger to similar attitudes. Consider *CHARLIE CHAN IN PARIS* (1935) and Charlie’s encounter with the racist Max Corday (Erik Rhodes), who greets Charlie with an offensive, “Me velly happy know you. Maybe you likey have a little dlinky?” only to have the detective properly and politely respond, “Very happy to make acquaintance of charming gentleman,” and then mock Corday’s rudeness by aping his exaggerated accent, adding, “Me no likey dlinky now. Pellhaps later.” It’s a priceless put-down of racial stereotyping, not an endorsement of it—and it comes in the same movie that introduced Asian actor Keye Luke to the series.

Keye Luke addressed the issue of the movies’ supposed racism and one of NAPALC’s (and Eleanor Lee’s) other charges—that Charlie “speaks with an overly exaggerated accent”—when he talked to me about the movies in 1986. Luke said of star Warner Oland, “A lot of people think that he spoke Pidgin English. And a lot of the detractors out here—a lot of young Chinese activists, who argue only emotionally, not with their heads—say, ‘Oh, he talks “Me no savvy” and all that sort of stuff.’ I said, ‘Oh, no. If you will listen to him, he, as an actor, is thinking in terms of Chinese and then he has to put into a language that is not his native language.’ That’s why he fumbles, stumbles, gropes for a word, which all adds to the characterization. He had the genius to realize that. And his English, if you listen to it next time, syllable upon syllable, is what we call International Stage English. It’s perfectly beautiful

English. And so, I mean, there are a lot of things about the Chan character that these people don’t understand. They think it demeans the race. I said, ‘Demeans! My God! You’ve got a Chinese hero!’”

According to NAPALC, the use of a white actor in the role of Chan “is a reminder of the bad old days when Asian Americans were totally excluded from most jobs in the media and the mainstream, and were often mocked or demonized as foreigners.” The statement overlooks the fact that the mere casting of Keye Luke hardly supports the idea of exclusion. The organization would be hard-pressed to support the idea that anything about Charlie mocks or demonizes Asians—but, in fact, the NAPALC doesn’t attempt to support the claim; they just make it.

Shortly after the *USA Today* article, I was asked to appear on FOX NEWS LIVE WITH ALAN COLMES to discuss the issue with Colmes and Asian American actor Ken Narasaki, a representative of APAMC (the Asian Pacific Media Coalition). Narasaki agreed that the main issue wasn’t so much that the films are offensive, but that the big issue lay in the casting of a white actor as Charlie. “It’s not the films per se,” Narasaki said. “I think it’s that Charlie Chan has become a symbol for Asian Americans and everything that’s wrong with Hollywood

*Continued on page 70*





# Formerly Kay Linaker

Kate Phillips remembers  
Charlie Chan, the Blob,  
and the men who directed  
FRANKENSTEIN and DRACULA.



Interview by Leonard J. Kohl

Kate Phillips—the former Broadway and Hollywood actress known as Kay Linaker—may look like someone's kindly, white-haired grandmother, but when you see the fire in her eyes (a nice, warm fire, but a fire, nonetheless), you realize she's someone special. That's not just because Kate worked with some of the truly great directors, actors, and actresses of Hollywood's Golden Age, but because she did more than merely bask in that rarified glory.

Today, at almost 90 years of age, Kate Phillips is dedicated to giving college students some of the gifts she got as an actress. With more energy than many people half her age, she teaches hopeful actors, actresses, and writers some of the tricks of the trade that she was fortunate to learn from a nearly 70-year career on Broadway and in Hollywood as an actress and writer.

And what a career! She starred with Buck Jones in *BLACK ACES* (1937), worked under the directorial hand of John Ford in *YOUNG MR. LINCOLN* (1939) and *DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK* (1939), Otto Preminger in *LAURA* (1944), and, in his sad last days as a director, James Whale in *GREEN HELL* (1940) and *THEY DARE NOT LOVE* (1941).

She was friends with *DRACULA* (1931) director Tod Browning. She worked with Henry Fonda, Mary Astor, Charlie Chan stars Warner Oland and Sidney Toler, and Steve McQueen, and befriended James Cagney, Pat O'Brien, and Boris Karloff. She cowrote the cult classic *THE BLOB* (1958).

I was fortunate enough to encounter Kate Phillips at a meeting of the National Lum and Abner Society in Mena, Arkansas, in 1998, and then at a Buck Jones Rangers of America film convention in Rochester, New York, in 2000, where this remarkable woman was happy to talk about her life and career for *Scarlet Street*...

*Scarlet Street:* Your first film in Hollywood, in 1936, was *THE MURDER OF DOCTOR HARRIGAN*, starring Ricardo Cortez. Kate Phillips: In all my time in Hollywood, I only met two people I didn't like. One was my leading man in my first picture, and Mary Astor took care of him for me. Ricardo Cortez was an ugly, ugly man! Looking at it now, I realize that he was hired for the film because he had the Valentino look. And he never made it! He was a Jewish boy and he was groomed as a Spanish lover, and he had a very unsatisfactory life. Now I realize that's what made him so unpleasant, but at the time I didn't think about things like that. I had taken psychology in college, but the psychology that you took then was very different from the psychology you take now. It was one step from voodoo! (Laughs) All I knew was that he was a very unpleasant person; he was

somebody you didn't want to know any better. In *THE MURDER OF DOCTOR HARRIGAN*, he kissed me—and it was all I could do to not shut my eyes! Mary Astor told me the important thing in a kiss is that you start the kiss with your eyes open and slowly close them.

*SS:* So that it seems passionate?

KP: Absolutely! With Ricardo Cortez, it was all I could do to keep my eyes open; I wanted them shut real hard! He was a difficult man. I did work with him later on as a director, and his attitude when I was no longer in competition for his scenes was different. He



lost for her and in the cutting room they'll use your shot and not hers, if you do that once more I'm going to be on this set every day, whether I'm called or not, and I'm going to have a coughing fit and fix you, friend." He said, "Well, I seem to get the job of breaking in all the girls," and she said, "Yes, if I remember correctly, you broke in Garbo, didn't you?" She went back and sat down and—after the next shot, which was absolutely perfect—she didn't make another sound! (Laughs)

*SS:* That was certainly generous under the circumstances. KP: Mary said, "Do you know where your keylight is?" I said, "What's that?" She looked at the cameraman and said, "As long as you were teaching her, why didn't you tell her something important?" So she told me where my keylight was and, from that point on, everybody helped me. The boys

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KP: On the third day, this absolutely stunning redhead came over to me and said, "Hi, my name is Mary Astor. I've heard some very good things about you and I want to check you out." She waved to Ricardo Cortez and sat down. We ran through the scene and the camera rolled. Mary was watching and all of a sudden, just toward the end of the scene, she had a coughing fit. She apologized profusely and we did it again—and she had another coughing fit. This time she walked over to Ricardo Cortez and said, "Rick, she's a very nice girl. She's also a very good actress and I'm not going to watch you ruin her career because you're selfish. If you get in her keylight once more, if you make her turn so that the shot is

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was oh so glad to see me and congratulated me on what I'd done since *THE MURDER OF DOCTOR HARRIGAN*. I didn't believe a word of it! (Laughs)

SS: How was he as a director?

KP: Well, he was top dog! How good he was depended on how well he was able to work with people. Therefore, his attitude was completely different. See, I was in competition with him on *THE MURDER OF DOCTOR HARRIGAN*. There was equal billing for Ricardo Cortez and Kay Linaker, and Mary Astor was on the line below us. On my first picture, I had top billing! Warner Bros. was grooming me for one of the top female positions. The top person at Warners was Kay Francis, and then came Mary Astor and Margaret Lindsay, and I was number four.

SS: How did Mary Astor handle Cortez?

KP: Mary Astor had originally been scheduled to do the part that I played





TOP LEFT: Kay Linaker replaced the already established Mary Astor in the role of Nurse Sally Keating in *THE MURDER OF DR. HARRIGAN* (1936). TOP RIGHT: Chief Souto (Harold Huber), Charlie Chan (Sidney Toler), and Barbara Cardozo (Kay Linaker) kibitz while Grace Ellis (Cobina Wright Jr.), Ken Reynolds (Richard Derr), and Bill Kellogg (Hamilton MacFadden) bluff in *CHARLIE CHAN IN RIO* (1941). BOTTOM LEFT: James Whale directs. BOTTOM LEFT: Tod Browning sheds light on the set of *LONDON AFTER MIDNIGHT* (1927) with early horror star Lon Chaney and Edna Tichenor.

up high realized that I was being victimized, so they'd do things like joggling a light when Ricardo Cortez was standing right below it. That's how the boys took out their spite. Mary said, "You must come see the rushes." I saw myself on the screen for the first time, and I barely made it to the ladies room! (Laughs) It is a horrible, horrible, horrible situation to see yourself on the screen for the first time! Mary made me come to the rushes every day and she taught me other things. She said, "Never do that again!" I said, "What?" She said, "When you smile in the closeup, your lip goes up and we see your gums.

Put your tongue against your upper teeth. You cannot raise your upper lip when your tongue is against your upper teeth." I learned real quick! So my experience in film from the very beginning was wonderful—but one guy that I really have no fondness for is Ricardo Cortez. SS: And the other is...?

KP: The other is George Sanders. Of course, everybody who ever worked with him disliked him! Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Vincent Price, Joan Bennett—along with me, they were the people in *GREEN HELL* with George Sanders—they disciplined him; they put him in Coventry. Nobody spoke to him! His

behavior was so bad that people pretended they didn't see him. That's the British public school method of discipline—and, boy, it really works!

SS: *GREEN HELL* was directed by James Whale, who made many of Universal's greatest horror films, including *FRANKENSTEIN* and *THE INVISIBLE MAN*.

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Continued on page 75







TOP LEFT: Kay Linaker replaced the already established Mary Astor in the role of Nurse Sally Keating in *THE MURDER OF DR. HARRIGAN* (1936). TOP RIGHT: Chief Souto (Harold Huber), Charlie Chan (Sidney Toler), and Barbara Cardozo (Kay Linaker) kibitz while Grace Ellis (Cobina Wright Jr.), Ken Reynolds (Richard Derr), and Bill Kellogg (Hamilton MacFadden) bluff in *CHARLIE CHAN IN RIO* (1941). BOTTOM LEFT: James Whale directs. BOTTOM RIGHT: Tod Browning sheds light on the set of *LONDON AFTER MIDNIGHT* (1927) with early horror star Lon Chaney and Edna Tichenor.

up high realized that I was being victimized, so they'd do things like joggling a light when Ricardo Cortez was standing right below it. That's how the boys took out their spite. Mary said, "You must come see the rushes." I saw myself on the screen for the first time, and I barely made it to the ladies room! (Laughs) It is a horrible, horrible, horrible situation to see yourself on the screen for the first time! Mary made me come to the rushes every day and she taught me other things. She said, "Never do that again!" I said, "What?" She said, "When you smile in the closeup, your lip goes up and we see your gums.

Put your tongue against your upper teeth. You cannot raise your upper lip when your tongue is against your upper teeth." I learned real quick! So my experience in film from the very beginning was wonderful—but one guy that I really have no fondness for is Ricardo Cortez.

SS: And the other is . . . ?

KP: The other is George Sanders. Of course, everybody who ever worked with him disliked him! Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Vincent Price, Joan Bennett—along with me, they were the people in *GREEN HELL* with George Sanders—they disciplined him; they put him in Coventry. Nobody spoke to him! His

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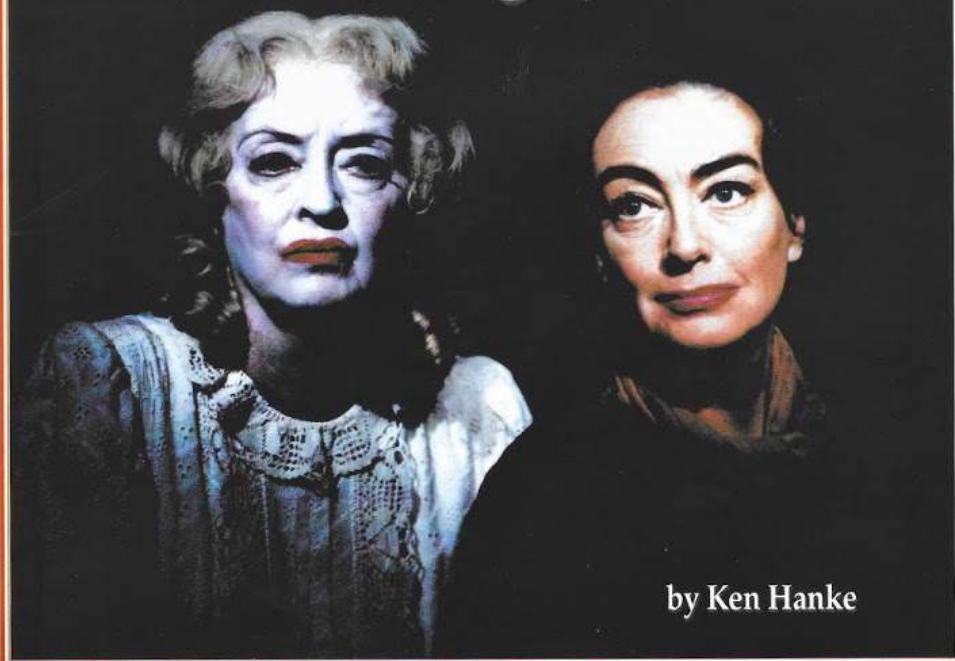
*Continued on page 75*





# Attack of the Horror Hags

## Part Two



by Ken Hanke

While Bette Davis and company had been reveling in the stylized grotesquerie of the "horror hag" genre, not all films with a fantastic and/or Gothic story were quite as exploitative or over the top. There were far more sober offerings from actresses who might have been considered not quite in their prime, dating back to Jack Clayton's *THE INNOCENTS* (1961), featuring 40-year-old Deborah Kerr as a haunted governess, and Robert Wise's *THE HAUNTING* (1963) starring 38-year-old Julie Harris. Neither of these ladies could by any stretch fall into the Davis/Crawford/deHavilland category, but their films still indicated a movement toward genre films that focused on female characters who were clearly not ingenués and who did much more than decorate the scene while emitting the occasional scream, as had been the lot of so many horror film actresses over the years.

Such, alas, was not the fate of Barbara Stanwyck in William Castle's *THE NIGHT WALKER* (1965). At 58, Stanwyck was more in line with the *WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE?* (1962)/*STRAIT-JACKET* (1964)/

*HUSH . . . HUSH, SWEET CHARLOTTE* (1964) realm. Nevertheless, there was simply no way she was going to stand still for the "hag treatment." Stylishly costumed (no jangling cheap jewelry for her), elegantly coiffed, and looking every inch the glamorous movie star, Stanwyck's Irene Trent offered something very different (at least so it seemed at first)—a female character not in her prime, who is still both sexual and desirable. That aspect of the Robert Bloch scripted film is both unusual for the period and somewhat farsighted. Unfortunately, the bulk of the film is Castle Claptrap 101.

This is apparent right from the beginning of the movie, which opens on typically cheesy images of "horror"—in this case, the horror of dreams, when we become (according to the hammy Paul Frees narration) "night walkers." Dreams—or at least a very low-budget Hollywoodized version of them—are at the core of the film. Blind, reclusive millionaire Howard Trent (a pre-*I DREAM OF JEANNIE* Hayden Rorke, sporting milky contact lenses) has become convinced that his un-



happy wife, Irene, is having an affair with another man because of the erotic mutterings she's prone to make in her sleep. Since Irene never leaves the house and they have few visitors, Trent's suspicions fall on his "trusted" lawyer, Barry Moreland (Robert Taylor, formerly married to Stanwyck and, like his ex-wife subject to gay rumors during his entire career).

It's a satisfactory enough setup, and Howard Trent—a sort of sightless variant on Everett Sloane's character in Orson Welles' *THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI* (1947)—is a suitably sinister character, given to the kind of kitschy statements one expects in a Castle film. ("See you soon, Barry — just a figure of speech.") The problem with this is that neither Castle nor Bloch seem to know what to do with it—and not knowing what to do with it, they default to the typical Castle world of scheming lawyers and bogus spooks (a la 1960's *13 GHOSTS*), with a little *GASLIGHT* thrown in.

Again evidencing the complete lack of a sense of irony that marked *STRAIT-JACKET*, Castle serves it all up with stupefyingly silly nightmare sequences composed of dry-ice mist, odd camera angles, department store mannequins, and breathtakingly naïve intrusions of process-work. As camp, it has a certain value—by the time we get to the little spinning heads in the four corners of the screen, the movie's gone beyond merely risible to outright funny—but it hardly works as any kind of horror.

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conviction—suggesting that, in real life, she'd be far more apt to burst out laughing at these "scary images" than anything else.

Where exploitation and a healthy profit went, it was inevitable that others would follow—and it wasn't surprising that Britain's Hammer Films was soon on the prowl for stars who were—well, not in the first blush of youth. It made perfect sense, since such films as *BABY JANE* and *CHAR-*

LOTTE were already not that far afield from the studio's forays into non-supernatural thrillers—for instance, *PARANOIAC* (1963) and *NIGHTMARE* (1964). The trick was to find a suitable property and star.

The property Hammer found was a 1962 novel by Anne Blaisdell called *Nightmare*. Since the company had just made a picture by that none-too-original name (at least three totally unrelated films had borne the title before the Hammer opus), *Nightmare* was rechristened *FANATIC* (1965). In the States, Hammer's distributor, Columbia Pictures, opted for the even more dramatically choice moniker *DIE! DIE! MY DARLING!* (Could any movie hope to live up to three exclamation points?)

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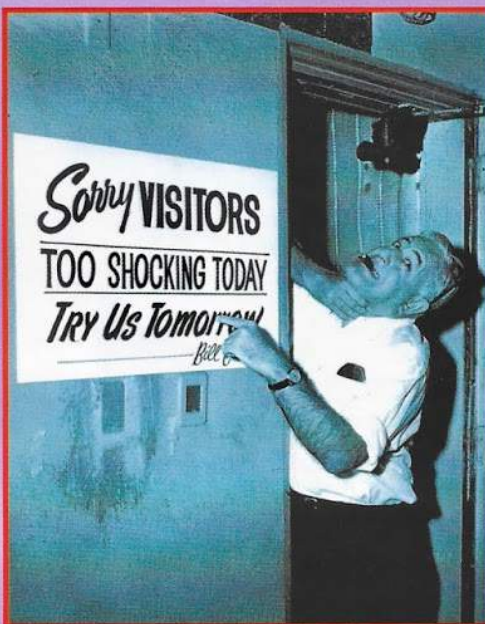
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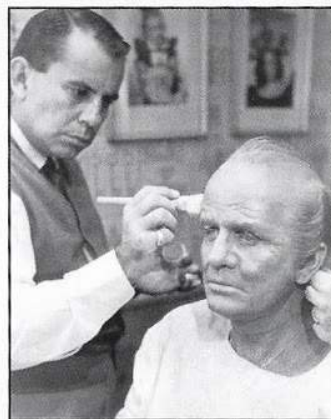
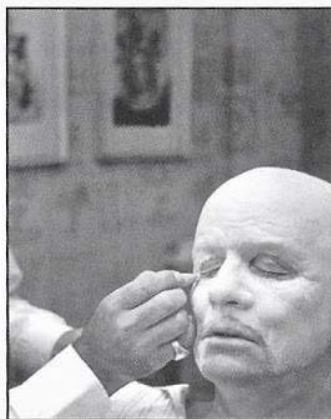
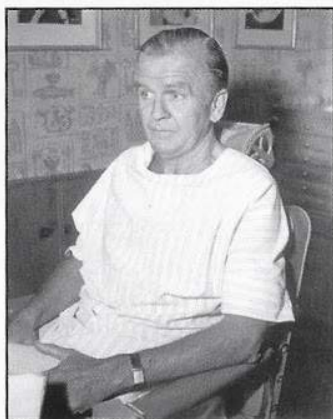
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TOP LEFT TO RIGHT: Hayden Rorke (Dr. Bellows on TV's *I DREAM OF JEANNIE*) is made up by Bud Westmore for his role as fire-scarred Howard Trent in *THE NIGHT WALKER* (1965). BOTTOM RIGHT: The result was so spooky that star Barbara Stanwyck (as Irene Trent) can barely keep from bursting out laughing.

head who had always been a dotty, religious recluse didn't seem believable to the filmmakers. It's easy to understand why.

A legendary theater star, Bankhead had never really been a movie star in any real sense, even though she occasionally tried her hand at it—most notably in the bizarre Paramount melodrama *THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP* (1932), wherein an insanely jealous hubby (Charles Laughton) tries to do in both his wife (Tallulah) and her boyfriend (Gary Cooper), and in the confines of Alfred Hitchcock's *LIFEBOAT* (1944). In 1965, she hadn't made a movie in 20 years. Alcohol and drugs had taken a heavy toll and she'd become far less an actress than a kind of amusingly embarrassing parody of one, appearing mostly to poke fun at herself on occasional TV shows such as "The Celebrity Next Door" episode of *THE LUCY-DESI COMEDY HOUR* (1957). Even then, Bankhead retained some sense of glamour and star quality. *DIE! DIE! MY DARLING!* couldn't rid her of the star quality—nothing could—but it stripped away every vestige of glamour. Her trademark hair was generally pulled back into a tight bun and her haphazardly (but religiously) applied makeup was not in existence. At 63—and looking a good 10 years older—Bankhead stood before the cameras stripped of all her surface details as the dangerously unbalanced religious fanatic Mrs. Trefoile. It was almost a stroke of cruel genius—Tallulah Bankhead as the Anti-Tallulah.

By the evidence on the screen, Bankhead seemed to be loving every over-the-top minute of it. Her Mrs. Trefoile is an essay in effective theatricality—a totally believable monster with a trace of sympathy that ought not be believable, but somehow succeeds. If Bette Davis had chewed the scenery in *BABY JANE* and *CHARLOTTE*, Tallulah ate it nails and all in *DARLING*. It's an intensely broad performance that works in large part simply because it's Tallulah Bankhead—and all that that implies—in the role.

Television director Silvio Narizzano took the reins for his first feature. The results were impressive enough that the following year he'd make a tremendous splash with the seminal sixties classic *GEORGY GIRL* (1966), which briefly made him a top-name director—something he blew in 1968 with *BLUE*. United Artists deemed him unsuitable to helm *WOMEN IN LOVE* (1969) and handed it over to another TV director, Ken Russell. After that, Narizzano's career stalled—but in 1965, he was just approaching the top of his game, bringing a fresh sensibility to *DIE! DIE! MY DARLING!*—despite the fact that he felt Tallulah was a little campy.

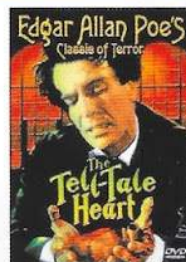
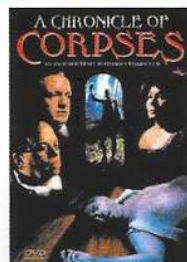
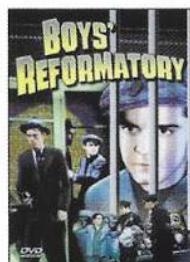
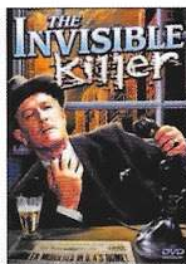
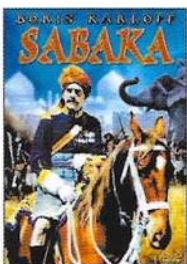
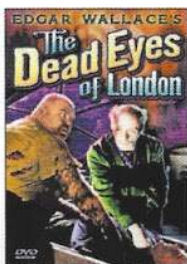
According to Wayne Kinsey in his book *Hammer Films: The Bray Studio Years* (2002), Nariz-

zano would have preferred someone like Flora Robson in the role. However—and despite a variety of Bankhead tantrums, walk-offs, and general outrages—Narizzano did not find working with her an unpleasant experience. In fact, Bankhead was far from the tyrannical figure he expected. "She liked to be shown everything. I remember getting mad at her one day and saying, 'I don't know how to do it—you're the actress!' And she said, 'I'm not an actress, dahling . . . I'm a star!'" She also seemed to feel that the whole project was just a little bit silly, asking Narizzano daily, "What dumb thing are we going to do today, dahling?" The director took it all with good humor, even going to her hotel nightly to play poker with her. "She was very lonely when she was over here," Narizzano commented.

The film's setup for is extremely simple. Patricia Carroll (Stefanie Powers) arrives in England with new fiancé Alan (Maurice Kaufman), feeling she needs to pay a courtesy call on the mother of her late fiancé, Stephen Trefoile. Apparently, she's never heard of the value of sending a nice note, but then if she did that, there'd be no plot. Anyway, her actions are perfectly in keeping with her subsequent non-worldly behavior. After all, anyone but Patricia would take one look at the sub-COLD COMFORT FARM inhabitants of the Trefoile menage—not just Tallulah, but Peter Vaughan as openly oversexed handyman Harry, Yootha Joyce as put-upon wife Anna, and Donald Sutherland as household half-wit Joseph—and high-tail it back to London. Not so Patricia, who finds them only mildly dis-







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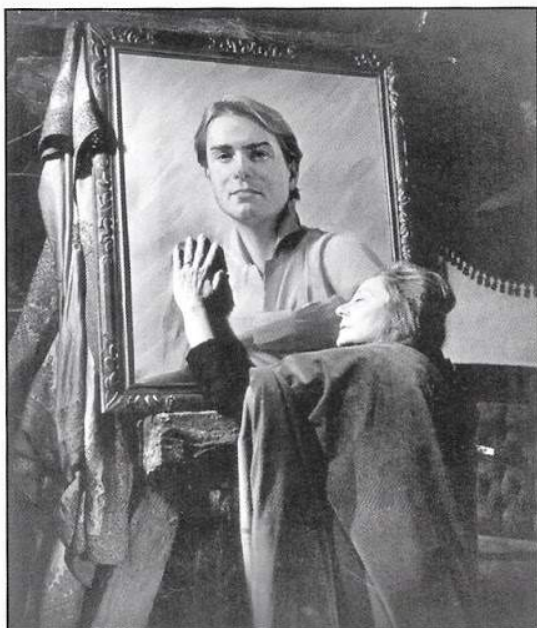
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**TOP LEFT:** There's a hint of *SUDDENLY, LAST SUMMER* (1959) in the way Mrs. Trefoile (Tallulah Bankhead) worships her dead son with, "DIE! DIE! MY DARLING!" (1965). **TOP RIGHT:** Cleverly, the Trefoile attic includes a theater poster for the Michael Arlen play *THE GREEN HAT*, which made Bankhead a London celebrity in 1925. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Bankhead shows costar Stefanie Powers how to deliver a sharp line pointedly. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** The cameras roll on a severely deglamorized Tallulah.

concerting. Even such outbursts as Mrs. Trefoile enthusing over her late son with, "I can only rejoice that he died unblemished—a virgin soul," doesn't faze her. Indeed, one wonders if Patricia would figure out that things are amiss if she actually saw Mrs. Trefoile lying on the bed, clutching a teddy bear and addressing her late son with, "Stephen, Stephen—she's here in this house, my darling, but of course you know . . ."

Then again, the viewer already knows the premise, so perhaps Patricia's incredibly credulous nature is excusable. It really doesn't matter, since most of this is an excuse for Tallulah to cut loose with a wide variety of theatrical outbursts delightfully cobbled from a variety of cinematic and literary religious nutcases. "Mirror? To adorn yourself? To observe yourself? Mirrors are naught but the tools of vanity, Patricia! I know! Vanity, sensual-

ity, Patricia. The Bible speaks of our 'vile bodies.' I knew you'd understand," Mrs. Trefoile rails—in seeming imitation of Rebecca Fenn (Eva Moore) in *THE OLD DARK HOUSE* (1932)—when Patricia innocently asks for a mirror. This works as well as it does simply because of the baggage that comes with Tallulah. Her outbursts about lipstick ("Go and remove that filth at once!") and a red dress ("What are you wearing? The devil's color! Go upstairs immediately and put on something proper!") are all the funnier because of who's saying them—while there's something positively blasphemous about Tallulah reading scripture while holding Powers at gunpoint.

At that, the film is shrewd in that it has just enough depth to keep it from complete caricature. It even manages to blend caricature and characterization in the scene in which Patricia discovers that Mrs. Trefoile used







**LEFT:** Joan Crawford was accustomed to playing opposite male costars as hunky as actor/nude model John Hamill (one of several muscleboys cast by Herman Cohen in his pictures). **RIGHT:** Unfortunately, Crawford's true costar in *TROG* (1970) was Joe Cornelius as the titular troglodyte. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Bette Davis railed at acting opposite Crawford after *WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE?* (1962), but she wasn't above borrowing her eyebrows for *THE NANNY* (1965).

to be an actress. (In the basement, along with a portrait of her son that resides there a la the Picture of Dorian Gray, is a theater poster—sadly, barely seen in the film itself—for Michael Arlen's *THE GREEN HAT*, the play that made Bankhead the toast of London in 1925.) "God was good. He led me from that evil!" Mrs. Trefoile tells Patricia, adding, "Yes! A pit of evil! A place for the lost and the damned! The devil's entertainment. God's anathema. It is a painful memory to me, but by the grace of our Lord and the inspired inspiration of my late husband, no more than a memory. I keep it as a harsh reminder of what I was, of what I escaped!" Tallulah is a good enough actress to convey that there's something far deeper—far more conflicted—going on than this simple mental self-flagellation, a point made clear late in the film when we see Mrs. Trefoile tipping from a bottle carefully hidden away with a stash of makeup and a mirror. None of this is overstated to a degree that it interferes with the essential fun of watching the grand old lady of the theater run amuck, but it's certainly there.

The Richard Matheson script—while admittedly making Patricia a bit slow on the uptake—is carefully constructed to slowly reveal the full extent of Mrs. Trefoile's madness. Her abrupt early outbursts are often more rude than anything else ("Patricia, you are a virgin, aren't you?"), and though we soon learn early on that she doesn't approve of the new rector (Henry McGee), it's not until much later that we learn why. ("He remarried, Patricia! Two years after his first wife died, he remarried again in this very church!") Similarly, while we know that there's something seriously wrong with Mrs. Trefoile's entire take on her late son's relationship with Patricia, we don't learn how wrong it is till this same point in the story. When Patricia mentions that all religions allow remarriage on the death of a spouse, Mrs. Trefoile is horror-stricken. "You condone this evil, then? It's against God's law. You have fallen into deeper error than I imagined! But innocently so, I must believe so as not to contaminate Stephen beyond redemption. You, a wedded woman . . ." Patricia can't countenance what she's being told, but is informed, "You cannot mean you do not realize you are, my child. You are Stephen's wife—proposal or marriage, it is all the same in the eyes of

God. You are Stephen's wife. You should be grateful that you have been permitted to escape any gross consummation of that marriage and can live out your life as a virgin until it shall please God to call you to Stephen's side!"

Unfortunately, since this idea holds far less appeal for Patricia than it does for Mrs. Trefoile, it's not too long before the old lady predictably decides that it would be better for all concerned to expedite the process of reuniting her son and his "bride." At this point, the film does, alas, become a little more ordinary, though never disastrously so, thanks in large part to the sheer force of Tallulah on the loose, stalking about the sets packing a pistol like some aged caricature of Leslie Crosbie in the Somerset Maugham meller *THE LETTER* (1927), eager to fill her lover with lead. Even if *DIE! DIE! MY DARLING!* loses a bit of steam in wrapping up the plot, it remains a fascinating exercise in hagdom.

Following *DIE! DIE! MY DARLING!* into neighborhood movie theaters by several months was *I SAW WHAT YOU DID* (1965), a quasi-reteaming







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of Joan Crawford and William Castle. It wasn't exactly a shining moment for either director or star—and it most certainly wasn't a Crawford vehicle a la *STRAIT-JACKET*. Instead, it was a pretty tepid affair centering on two teenage girls—Kit (Sara Lane) and Libby (Andi Garrett)—who make prank phone calls in which they tell their victims, "I saw what you did and I know who you are." It's harmless enough until they happen to call Steve Marak (John Ireland), who—as luck and clever scripting have it—has just offed his wife (Joyce Meadows). Naturally, Marak thinks the call is a real blackmail attempt. Before the film's end, of course, our teen heroines are wishing they'd stuck to asking if their targets had Prince Albert in a can.

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Not one to be outdone by Tallulah, Bette Davis had her own Hammer horror in the works—*THE NANNY*, which made its appearance just before Halloween of 1965. It was something of a surprise. Shot in black-and-white and rather subdued in tone, it was more like Hammer's earlier non-fantastical thrillers than Tallulah's *COLD-COMFORT-FARM*-with-a-body-count. And Davis—while inextricably Davis—approached the film far more soberly than she had her previous forays into the genre. For that matter, her Nanny hardly qualifies for the inglorious term of "hag," but to redefine it as an example of "monstrous matrons" would require creating a subgenre to the subgenre. Since *THE NANNY* still trades on the idea of casting an aging star in a horror film, that's simply splitting hairs.

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*Aunt Pen:* What happened?

*Nanny:* Miss Pen, go back to bed and I'll bring you your tea.

*Aunt Pen:* What happened?

*Nanny:* You're not well. Let Nanny...

*Aunt Pen:* Don't come near me!

*Nanny:* Why, Miss Pen, how could you?

It's a wholly controlled performance from Davis, as is her subsequent "handling" of the situation—using a trick she learned back in *THE LITTLE FOXES* (1941) with Herbert Marshall.

The only downside is the very thing that makes *THE NANNY* at least a borderline great horror picture—simply that it's not as much fun as we've come to expect from the horror hag subgenre. It's almost a case of a movie being too good for its own good. It results in a brilliantly unsettling work that you probably wouldn't want to see too often.

It was almost as if the grimness of *THE NANNY* put an end to the subgenre. Nothing of any real note surfaced again until February 1968, when both it and Davis returned with one of the most peculiar films of its type, *THE ANNIVERSARY*. This is one of those rare films that defies attempts to pigeonhole it as concerns a specific genre. It isn't really a horror film, yet it's a horror film. It isn't really a drama, but it's a drama. It isn't really a comedy, but... One might even question whether or not Bette's stylish Mrs. Taggart with her designer clothes—and eyepatches—can properly be called a hag, even if one character in the film lumps her in with "those other hags in the French Revolution." At the same time, no other category quite fits her, except possibly Mae West's summation of Victor McLaglen in *KLONDIKE ANNIE* (1936): "Ya ain't no erl paintin', but ya are a fascinatin' monster." And a fascinating monster Davis certainly is in this film.

Apart from *THE ANNIVERSARY*'s source play by Bill MacIlwraith, its pedigree is almost pure Hammer, with producer Jimmy Sangster's screenplay and direction by Roy Ward Baker at the beginning of his Hammer career. (He'd just completed 1968's *QUATERMASS AND THE PIT*). Yet, much as the film defies categorization, there's not much about it to suggest Hammer—which in this instance is probably a good thing, since *THE ANNIVERSARY* is very much a "hip" sixties film, something the studio rarely seemed to get right. While lacking the more overt sixties trendiness evidenced in Narizzano's *DIE! DIE! MY DARLING!*, *THE ANNIVERSARY* has precisely the right feel for and of its era—and it's one of the more successful attempts of the day to preserve a play's theatricality without seeming stagebound. Indeed, it measures up fairly well in this regard in comparison with Peter Medak's *THE RULING CLASS* (1972), made a few years later. For that matter, Elaine Taylor's performance as Shirley Blair is markedly similar—as is the role—to Carolyn Seymour's in the Medak film.

If there is any influence here, it has to be from MacIlwraith's play, which made its bow at the Duke of York's theater in London's West End in April 1966. Peter Barnes'

play, *THE RULING CLASS*, didn't open till 1968. Three cast members from the stage production—Sheila Hancock, Jack Hedley, and James Cossins—reprise their roles in the film version (they also appeared in Richard Lester's *HOW I WON THE WAR* in 1967), while Christian Roberts and Elaine Taylor inherited the roles originally created by Michael Crawford and June Ritchie. Most improbably, the part of Mrs. Taggart was first played by Mona Washbourne, and while it has been said that she was better in the role than Davis, it's hard to imagine how.

First and foremost, however, *THE ANNIVERSARY* is quintessential Bette Davis, ranking up there with her performances in *ALL ABOUT EVE* (1950), *BABY JANE*, and *CHARLOTTE*—and it's obvious she's having as much fun as anyone. The picture gives Mrs. Taggart a marvelous

buildup, but nothing quite prepares the viewer for her entrance set to "The Anniversary Song." It's a wonderful piece of theater made all the more effective because it's presented as a deliberate entrance with the music being played specifically for this moment. When she appears—dressed in a chic red dress with a matching red eyepatch—and dances down the stairs to greet her guests, the movie becomes at once funny, strangely graceful, and compelling, so much so that it's a relief when she trips at the bottom of the stairs, muttering, "Bloody hell," before instantly regaining her composure. The anniversary gathering of the family is a rather ghoulish affair, since it celebrates the wedding of Mr. and Mrs. Taggart—despite the fact that Mr. Taggart is long since dead. From the evidence of the events that follow, it's fairly apparent that Mrs. Taggart's devotion to her late husband is much more adamant in death than it ever was in life, and the gathering has more to do with keeping her three sons completely under her domination.

Soon Mrs. Taggart is mildly offending all the gathered family and their families or girlfriends. She'll enthuse over how pretty the flowers are only to ask, "Who died?" She opens a present and remarks, "Thank you. I've always liked this—that's why I gave it to you last year for Christmas." It's not long, however, before her remarks become more openly antagonistic, as when she comments on her relative inexperience at motherhood to her prolific daughter-in-law (Sheila Hancock) that "I've had three chicks of my own—only three, I grant you, Karen. Natural good manners told me when to put the plug in."

What is not clear is how much of this specialized rudery is natural talent, how much is twisted family ritual, and how much is for the sole purpose of horrifying newcomer—and would-be daughter-in-law Shirley, set to marry youngest son Tom (Christian Roberts). This sense of ambiguity helps make *THE ANNIVERSARY* a more complex and thought-provoking work than many of its sister essays in hagdom. That, however, is not the only aspect of the film that helps set it apart. There are also a number of unusual angles to the storyline, including the comic—yet boldly sympathetic—depiction of the eldest Taggart son, Henry (James Cossins), who is seemingly



*Continued on page 42*



The following memoir of Joan Crawford is excerpted from *John Ireland: An Autobiography*, an unpublished manuscript that Ireland wrote shortly before his death in 1992. Other actresses linked to Ireland are profiled in the book, including Carole Landis, Judy Garland, Shelley Winters, Joanne Dru, Tuesday Weld, Natalie Wood, and Angie Dickinson. In other chapters, Ireland recalls his disputes with Columbia studio head Harry Cohn, confrontations with John Wayne and Howard Hawks on the set of 1948's *RED RIVER* (after which most of his scenes were cut), and friendships with Laurence Harvey and Montgomery Clift. Ireland's autobiography—superbly written, acerbic and often painfully honest—is attracting interest from publishers in the United States and Canada.

—Harvey F. Chartrand

*Joan*

*(Dearest Mommy)*

by John Ireland

We were shooting *QUEEN BEE* (1955) starring Joan Crawford, on a sound stage at Columbia Studios. The head of the studio was still Harry Cohn (King Cohn, as he was now referred to). The King said an emphatic "no" to me being in the film.

I had sued Columbia for a release of my contract, and was successful in obtaining it. Something only Bette Davis and Humphrey Bogart had previously done at Warner Bros. I thought, after the "supreme compliment" he paid me in Las Vegas, I had been forgiven, so in a way I couldn't understand his feeling of animosity, but Joan would have none of it. Quote: "If John Ireland doesn't get the part, I'll take the property elsewhere." End quote.

"Quiet on the set, goddammit!"

First line of dialogue, while dancing with Joan...

*Me (holding her close):* They look real.

I was supposed to be admiring her jewelry; instead I was staring deep into a low-cut gown.

*She (aware? of course):* Everything I have is real.

*Me (actual dialogue):* I'd be the last to deny it.

I started to pull away in embarrassment; nature had overtaken the dialogue. Joan was happy with the ad lib, and responded.

*She (breaking into laughter):* Don't be afraid. I'm not going to eat you.

*Director (It is the first day of shooting and he is already two hours behind schedule.):* Cut! Am I missing something? All right, let's go again.

*Me (trying):* They look real.

*She (still aware):* Everything I have is real.

*Me (ad lib):* Yeah, me, too.

We are both into uncontrollable laughter. The assistant director calls lunch, thank God.

After lunch, shooting moved into high gear. Every scene was done in one take. At 5:30, Joan's husky voice announced that it was "post time." A lovely bucket of ice, holding an even lovelier bottle of the finest Russian vodka (Stolichnaya), made its appearance. We both showed our appreciation.

I got to be the "Gunga Din" vodka boy every night at "post time." I carried the bucket of Stolichnaya to the projection room where we watched the dailies (the "dailies" being the film that had been developed from the previous day's work.) We both thought the scenes were very well acted. Joan was extremely excited about the way she was photographed by Charles Lang.

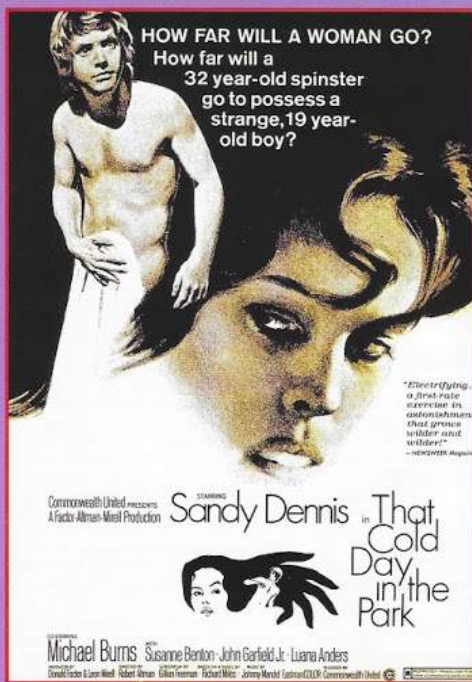
Happily, we trod back to her dressing room, and happily we terminated the Stolichnaya. Al Steele of the "Pepsi" Steeles was curled up on an oversized sofa, sound asleep. He remained that way, even when we were ready to leave. I asked Joan if we shouldn't wake him for dinner. "Fuck him," she said. "We're having dinner."

Frascati's Restaurant on Sunset Boulevard was one of the nicest, where you could dine in much comfort and much privacy. I was grateful for both, and for the attention that was lavished, and for the bill that never arrived. I don't know why, maybe it was the Stolichnaya, or the Dom Perignon, or the company, but I suddenly went back to the dialogue we had shot that morning. "They look real," I murmured. "What do you mean look real?" she responded. "Everything I have is real, so let's not have any more mysteries, but I'm sure as hell not going to undress here."

*Continued on page 76*







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#### ATTACK OF THE HORROR HAGS Continued from page 40

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Perhaps the real surprise of the film, though, is the fact that it works first and foremost as a vehicle for Davis, but doesn't stint on the other characters or performances. Sure, Bette Davis is the central force of the proceedings. After all, here's a film in which she's af-

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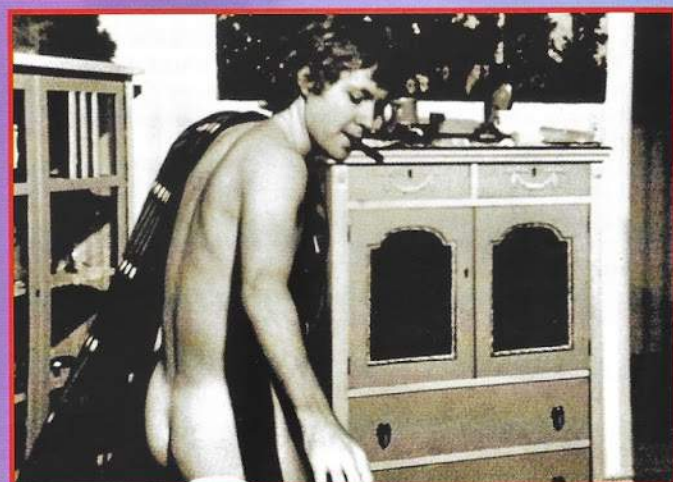
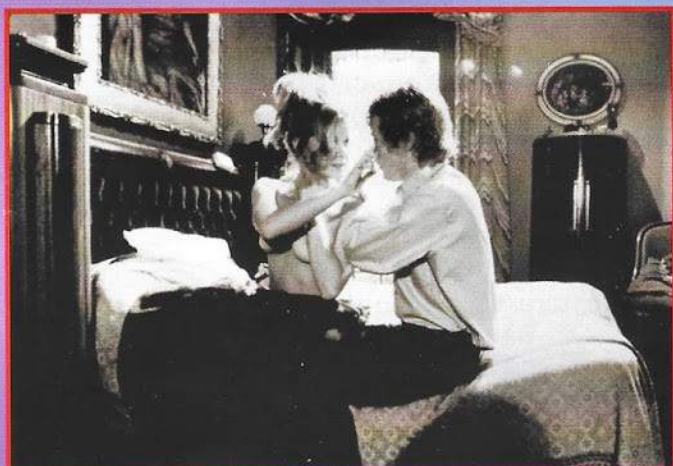
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Much less interesting was Bernard Girard's *THE MAD ROOM*, which hit theaters in May 1969. A reworking of Reginald Denham and Edward Percy's 1940 play *LADIES IN RETIREMENT* (and its 1941 film version), it upped the original's horror content, but added little in the bargain. *THE MAD ROOM* is mainly a vehicle for Stella Stevens as housekeeper Ellen Hardy, whose younger brother and sister (played by Michael Burns and Barbara Sammeth) were imprisoned for murdering Mom and Dad. *THE MAD ROOM* is of passing interest here as the film that brought Shelley Winters (as the housekeeper's bitchy employer, Mrs. Armstrong) to the fringe of the genre. It wouldn't be long before Winters would carve her own special niche in hagdom.

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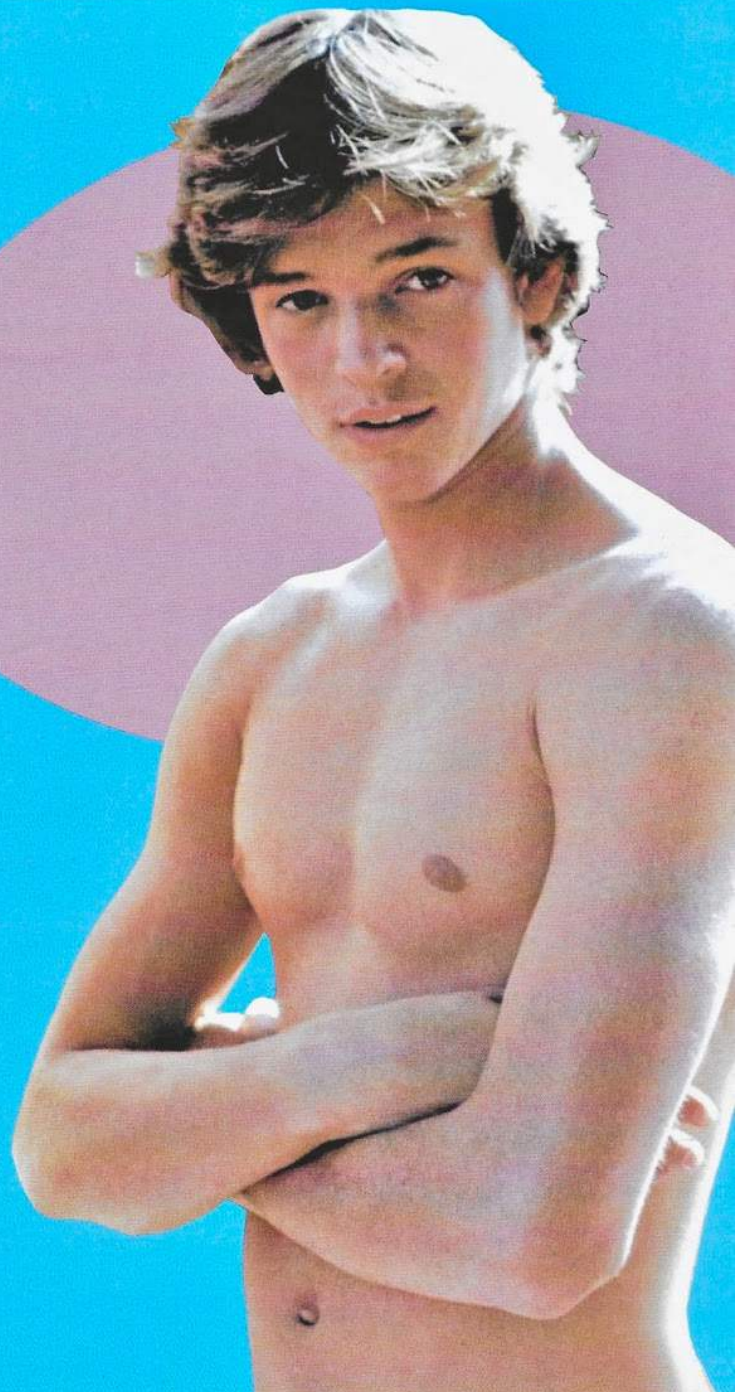




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Altman's film was something else again—a kind of female variant on William Wyler's *THE COLLECTOR* (1965). The story presents us with the obviously repressed and very proper Frances, a woman of some means (inherited), living in a posh apartment in Vancouver. Every aspect of her life is controlled from beyond the grave by her late mother, who has left her surrounded by protective relatives, lawyers, and even a housekeeper (Rae Brown) who seems as much an extension of Frances' mother as an employee. When the film opens, Frances spies a young man (Michael Burns, who had played James Stewart's TV-obsessed son in 1962's *MR. HOBBS TAKES A VACATION*) sitting in the park. Something about him captures her attention, and when it begins to rain she opts to invite him to her apartment.

Everything seems ripe to present a *KIND LADY* sort of melodrama in which a woman's act of generosity leads to her being victimized. The film, in fact, spends considerable time seeming to set this up. The Boy (he has no name) presents himself as unable to speak, which is untrue. He presents himself as on his own in the world—or Frances assumes this and he doesn't correct her—and he isn't. He definitely plays on Frances' sympathies and makes his way into her household. This, however, is only what appears to be happening as the film slowly reveals that it isn't Frances who's at risk, but the Boy.

Altman peels away the veneer of our expectations in a methodical manner, leading to a point where Frances delivers a long monologue, confessing her loneliness and expressing a desire to sleep with the Boy—only to fly into a rage when she discovers she's poured out her soul to an empty bed. When this occurs, the film changes direction, detailing the Boy's imprisonment and Frances' descent into madness born of sexual repression—all leading to a needless tragedy. It's a very Altmanesque project in that it stands our expectations on their head, but it's unlike Altman in its almost unbearably oppressive atmosphere—an accomplished, but not very likable work.

The same might be said of the next such film to go down this particular path—Curtis Harrington's *THE KILLING KIND*, which didn't come out until 1973, by

which time Harrington had already given the subgenre quite the finest of the post-Aldrich hag horrors, *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?* (1971). *THE KILLING KIND* is something else again, having more in common with Harrington's *NIGHT TIDE* (1962) and a bit of the flavor of Paul Morrissey's Warhol movies. It's more overtly horrific and considerably more exploitative than *THAT COLD DAY IN THE PARK*, but thematically the films are not dissimilar narratives about sexual repression and the tragic events brought on by that repression. Harrington ups the ante considerably, though, by tossing in incest, impotence, voyeurism, rape, and necrophilia.

The story starts with Terry Lambert (John Savage) being forced by his friends to participate in the gang rape of a girl (Sue Bernard)—and though he is incapable of actually going through with the act, he lands in prison for two years on a rape conviction. Harrington's depiction of the rape is interesting in that it's not only bold in its brutality, but doesn't shy away from the underlying misogyny and homoerotic undercurrents inherent in this kind of gang rape. The very fact that his friends literally pull down Terry's pants and attempt to initiate him into the crime strongly suggests that it has more to do with a kind of bonding they can't deal with than anything else.

The film jumps ahead two years to Terry's release from prison and his return to the arms of his overly dotting mother, Thelma Lambert (Ann Sothern), and her creepy boarding house. From the onset, there's no question but that mom is too devoted to her son. We soon learn that she has his entire life catalogued in a series of framed and hung photographs (she insists there can never be too many) from her efforts as an amateur photographer. Terry is her "baby boy" and she treats him as if he has never grown up, constantly offering him a glass of chocolate milk (something that takes on an almost sinister aspect in its repetition—and rightly so by the end of the film), spying on him, and generally controlling him. In many ways, Terry hasn't grown up—mostly due to his mother's obsessive love, which more than borders on an incestuous fixation.

What Thelma doesn't realize—even after he nearly drowns the newest tenant, Lori (Cindy Williams), when she comes onto him in the pool—is that Terry is seriously unbalanced. Not long after he returns to the civilian world, he murders both the girl whose testimony put him in prison and his apparently inept lawyer, Rhea Benson (Ruth Roman). Harrington's handling of these (and a third murder to come) is unusual in that he concentrates on the fear and helplessness of the victims—to a point that is genuinely unsettling. Terry also comes very close to murdering his equally sexually repressed (by her



TOP LEFT: A rotting corpse provides experimental maggots with a *FLESH FEAST* (1970). TOP and BOTTOM RIGHT: Dr. Elaine Fredericks (Veronica Lake) uses her own patented maggots to perform plastic surgery on—Adolf Hitler.

father, played by Peter Brocco) next-door neighbor (Luana Anders), whose own problems make Terry easy to read. When she comes onto him one night, she talks about her own urges for destruction—of wanting to burn the books in the library where she works and dreaming about putting ground glass in her father's food—and finally expresses a desire to be raped. It's not long after this that she pegs Terry's inability to consummate any sex act, sending him into a frenzy.

Ultimately, Terry's mind gives out completely when he murders Lori (who seems to have learned nothing from the swimming pool episode) after she comes onto him a second time. Since the body is in the house and he's in a state of near catatonic collapse sitting on the bathroom floor next to it, Thelma can no longer deny the extent of her son's mental illness. Even though she helps dispose of the body, she realizes that it's only a matter of time till his madness brings about his undoing, so she does the only thing any mother could—she poisons Terry and sits with him, telling him how much he has meant to her as he dies. It's a truly astonishing moment, at once chilling and heartbreakingly sad. Harrington goes it one better, though, when Thelma takes one last photo of her beloved son, thereby completing the set.

A rich and remarkable film, *THE KILLING KIND* is notable in a number of areas. For purposes of horror hagdom, it allows Ann Sothern to join the elite of the form. In some ways, hers is the best and most complex of all the horror hags, simply because the collaboration between her and Harrington brings a depth of sympathy not usually found in a subgenre that thrived on camp and kitsch. Not that her Thelma Lambert is without those elements—the woman is never more than one cat shy of becoming that old lady—but there's a fragile humanity always lurking just beneath that surface. She gets her one-liners in—neatly skewering Lori's modeling ambitions by commenting that her supposed "interesting" look is "what they always say when they won't say pretty"—but is herself just as capable of being deeply hurt.

With the exception of Cindy Williams (and admittedly, the part isn't very well conceived), the film is well served by its cast. John Savage may have a tendency to wander into a James Dean impression (at one point, it's hard not to expect him to scream, "You're tearing me apart!"), but all in all he gives a strong accounting of himself. The subordinate female roles undertaken by Roman and Anders are letter perfect, and it's nice to see Marjorie Eaton, who had played the fortune teller in *NIGHT TIDE*, back on Harrington's roster of players.

Perhaps Harrington's greatest accomplishment in the film, though, is his sense of Los Angeles. Harrington's LA captures the underlying seediness and despair of the place in an almost surreal manner that is both unsettling and strangely dead on the mark. With the possible exception of David Lynch's *MULHOLLAND DRIVE* (2001, and it's a good bet that Lynch has seen *THE KILLING KIND*), this may be the most disturbing and brilliant depiction of LA on film. It probably isn't coincidental that LA native Harrington is a true Hollywood insider who knows the town inside and out—and a good many of its

*Continued on page 58*







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Altman peels away the veneer of our expectations in a methodical manner, leading to a point where Frances delivers a long monologue, confessing her loneliness and expressing a desire to sleep with the Boy—only to fly into a rage when she discovers she's poured out her soul to an empty bed. When this occurs, the film changes direction, detailing the Boy's imprisonment and Frances' descent into madness born of sexual repression—all leading to a needless tragedy. It's a very Altmanesque project in that it stands our expectations on their head, but it's unlike Altman in its almost unbearably oppressive atmosphere—an accomplished, but not very likable work.

The same might be said of the next such film to go down this particular path—Curtis Harrington's *THE KILLING KIND*, which didn't come out until 1973, by

which time Harrington had already given the subgenre quite the finest of the post-Aldrich hag horrors, *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?* (1971). *THE KILLING KIND* is something else again, having more in common with Harrington's *NIGHT TIDE* (1962) and a bit of the flavor of Paul Morrissey's Warhol movies. It's more overtly horrific and considerably more exploitative than *THAT COLD DAY IN THE PARK*, but thematically the films are not dissimilar narratives about sexual repression and the tragic events brought on by that repression. Harrington ups the ante considerably, though, by tossing in incest, impotence, voyeurism, rape, and necrophilia.

The story starts with Terry Lambert (John Savage) being forced by his friends to participate in the gang rape of a girl (Sue Bernard)—and though he is incapable of actually going through with the act, he lands in prison for two years on a rape conviction. Harrington's depiction of the rape is interesting in that it's not only bold in its brutality, but doesn't shy away from the underlying misogyny and homoerotic undercurrents inherent in this kind of gang rape. The very fact that his friends literally pull down Terry's pants and attempt to initiate him into the crime strongly suggests that it has more to do with a kind of bonding they can't deal with than anything else.

The film jumps ahead two years to Terry's release from prison and his return to the arms of his overly dotting mother, Thelma Lambert (Ann Sothorn), and her creepy boarding house. From the onset, there's no question but that mom is too devoted to her son. We soon learn that she has his entire life catalogued in a series of framed and hung photographs (she insists there can never be too many) from her efforts as an amateur photographer. Terry is her "baby boy" and she treats him as if he has never grown up, constantly offering him a glass of chocolate milk (something that takes on an almost sinister aspect in its repetition—and rightly so by the end of the film), spying on him, and generally controlling him. In many ways, Terry hasn't grown up—mostly due to his mother's obsessive love, which more than borders on an incestuous fixation.

What Thelma doesn't realize—even after he nearly drowns the newest tenant, Lori (Cindy Williams), when she comes onto him in the pool—is that Terry is seriously unbalanced. Not long after he returns to the civilian world, he murders both the girl whose testimony put him in prison and his apparently inept lawyer, Rhea Benson (Ruth Roman). Harrington's handling of these (and a third murder to come) is unusual in that he concentrates on the fear and helplessness of the victims—to a point that is genuinely unsettling. Terry also comes very close to murdering his equally sexually repressed (by her





**TOP LEFT:** A rotting corpse provides experimental maggots with a *FLESH FEAST* (1970). **TOP and BOTTOM RIGHT:** Dr. Elaine Fredericks (Veronica Lake) uses her own patented maggots to perform plastic surgery on—Adolf Hitler.

father, played by Peter Brocco) next-door neighbor (Luana Anders), whose own problems make Terry easy to read. When she comes onto him one night, she talks about her own urges for destruction—of wanting to burn the books in the library where she works and dreaming about putting ground glass in her father's food—and finally expresses a desire to be raped. It's not long after this that she pegs Terry's inability to consummate any sex act, sending him into a frenzy.

Ultimately, Terry's mind gives out completely when he murders Lori (who seems to have learned nothing from the swimming pool episode) after she comes onto him a second time. Since the body is in the house and he's in a state of near catatonic collapse sitting on the bathroom floor next to it, Thelma can no longer deny the extent of her son's mental illness. Even though she helps dispose of the body, she realizes that it's only a matter of time till his madness brings about his undoing, so she does the only thing any mother could—she poisons Terry and sits with him, telling him how much he has meant to her as he dies. It's a truly astonishing moment, at once chilling and heartbreakingly sad. Harrington goes it one better, though, when Thelma takes one last photo of her beloved son, thereby completing the set.

A rich and remarkable film, *THE KILLING KIND* is notable in a number of areas. For purposes of horror hagdum, it allows Ann Sothern to join the elite of the form. In some ways, hers is the best and most complex of all the horror hags, simply because the collaboration between her and Harrington brings a depth of sympathy not usually found in a subgenre that thrived on camp and kitsch. Not that her Thelma Lambert is without those elements—the woman is never more than one cat shy of becoming that old lady—but there's a fragile humanity always lurking just beneath that surface. She gets her one-liners in—neatly skewering Lori's modeling ambitions by commenting that her supposed "interesting" look is "what they always say when they won't say pretty"—but is herself just as capable of being deeply hurt.

With the exception of Cindy Williams (and admittedly, the part isn't very well conceived), the film is well served by its cast. John Savage may have a tendency to wander into a James Dean impression (at one point, it's hard not to expect him to scream, "You're tearing me apart!"), but all in all he gives a strong accounting of himself. The subordinate female roles undertaken by Roman and Anders are letter perfect, and it's nice to see Marjorie Eaton, who had played the fortune teller in *NIGHT TIDE*, back on Harrington's roster of players.

Perhaps Harrington's greatest accomplishment in the film, though, is his sense of Los Angeles. Harrington's LA captures the underlying seediness and despair of the place in an almost surreal manner that is both unsettling and strangely dead on the mark. With the possible exception of David Lynch's *MULHOLLAND DRIVE* (2001), and it's a good bet that Lynch has seen *THE KILLING KIND*, this may be the most disturbing and brilliant depiction of LA on film. It probably isn't coincidental that LA native Harrington is a true Hollywood insider who knows the town inside and out—and a good many of its

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Till we are called to rise;  
And then, if we are true to plan  
Our statures touch the skies.  
The heroism we recite  
Would be a daily thing  
Did not ourselves the cubits warp  
For fear to be a king.

*Emily Dickinson (1896)*



Top-billed Julie Harris knew instinctively that Elia Kazan's *EAST OF EDEN* (1955) would shoot James Dean to the heights of superstardom. Costar Richard Davalos, cast in the role of Aron Trask (the brother of Dean's character, Cal Trask), was lost in the shuffle.

The words of a brief—but wise—old verse of Emily Dickinson's, might also be an appropriate way to describe the powerful conviction behind actress Julie Harris, who would, in fact, give her own passionate portrayal of the famed poet and philosopher in *THE BELLE OF AMHERST* (1976), on both stage and television.

Born in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, in 1925, and raised in a family that greatly appreciated the theater, Julie Harris realized at an early age that she wanted a career in acting. By 1945, she had made her Broadway debut and was well on the way to becoming a beloved and highly respected icon of the profession.

Today, Julie Harris' stage, film, and television credits far exceed those of an average actor. When it comes to film buffs, she is probably best remembered for her distinctive roles in such classic motion pictures as *THE MEMBER OF THE WEDDING* (1952), *EAST OF EDEN* (1955), *REQUIEM FOR A HEAVYWEIGHT* (1962), *THE HAUNTING* (1963), and *HARPER* (1966). In 1997, I had the unparalleled pleasure of speaking with Julie about her remarkable career . . .

*Scarlet Street:* Let's start with your family background. Your father was an investment banker?

Julie Harris: Well, yes, he was, but he was also a scientist, a mammalogist. My mother, before she married my father, was a trained nurse. I have two brothers, but one is gone. My older brother died.

SS: Were either of your brothers interested in acting?

JH: Well, not acting, but they both loved the theater. My older brother taught English, but he loved plays. He taught fifth grade and was a wonderful teacher, a very gifted teacher. My youngest brother taught theater history at San Diego College.

SS: What attracted you to the theater?

JH: Well, my father, when he attended Yale University, was in the Yale dramatic society. He was also a tumbler and was always fascinated with the theater. My mother, when she was training to be a nurse in New York City, would spend all her spare money on going to see plays. They both had this great love of the theater, and when my brothers and I were growing up, they would take us to see all these plays. It was wonderful!

SS: After attending Yale Drama School, you made your Broadway debut in 1945.

JH: It was a play called *IT'S A GIFT*, by Curt Goetz. He was a popular comic actor from Germany who periodically wrote these plays. It was a story about a man and his 12 children, and I

was the oldest of the 12 children. It was my first show. I was just about 20, and I worked the next five years in New York in various plays.

SS: Didn't you also make a few television appearances around this time?

JH: Yes, I was a member of The Actors Studio and did several television shows before making my first film. It was an experience, because it was all done live at that time.

SS: James Dean, Marlon Brando, Montgomery Clift, and Shelley Winters—among many others—were all students of The Actors Studio and the Method style of acting. Did you necessarily consider yourself a Method actor?

JH: Well, I certainly studied it at The Actors Studio and was one of the original group, but whether I was a very good example of the Method—I don't know. I suppose I wasn't strictly what you would call a Method actor. I took what I felt I could use at the time and of the Method. I think a great example of a Method actor was Lee J. Cobb. He came from the Group Theater and was a prime actor of the Method.

SS: You went on to appear with Ethel Waters and Brandon de Wilde in the stage version of *THE MEMBER OF THE WEDDING*, which was a huge Broadway hit in 1950.

JH: Actually, we ran in New York for a year and a half, plus we did a spring





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JH: With Jimmy Dean. He was a legendary presence. It was a very exciting movie to work on, with actors like Raymond Massey and Jo Van Fleet and Burl Ives—they all gave such wonderful performances. It was a happy time. The thing is, we all knew that Jimmy Dean was a legendary actor. We knew it because he had such charisma and vitality—uniqueness. I think all of us knew he was going to be a big star.

SS: You definitely had a fine onscreen chemistry. Did you socialize offscreen?

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Jimmy was also fascinated with directing and I think he would have eventually gone into that if he could've found the right material.

SS: Is it true that much of Dean's performance was improvised?

JH: Well, that was a quality that he had. He didn't change the script, but

he would enliven it and elaborate on it. He didn't just read lines. He would open it up, and Mr. Kazan allowed him to do it and encouraged him to do it.

SS: One of the most compelling scenes in the film comes when Cal gives his father, played by Raymond Massey, the money he earned. How much of this was Elia Kazan's direction and how much was James Dean?

JH: It was a combination. Mr. Kazan allowed Jimmy to rehearse that scene and when it came time to film, he just incorporated it into the final cut. Jimmy would say and do things that surprised Raymond Massey. They didn't hit it off. Jimmy offended him by his behavior and that made him perfect for the part. Elia Kazan kind of delighted in that they didn't like each other. (Laughs) Well, not that they didn't like each other, but that their behavior was so far from congenial.

SS: What's your favorite scene in EAST OF EDEN?

JH: Oh, well, I love the ferris wheel scene! And I love the scene where Jimmy dismisses the nurse and then sits in the room with his father. I just love about every scene in the movie!

SS: Where were you when you first heard the news of James Dean's death?

JH: I don't remember if I heard it on the radio or read it in the paper, but I was in New York City at the time. I'd just had a baby in July. I was looking forward to him meeting my son and carrying on our friendship and I remember being very sad about it. He had such promise. I was looking forward to all the things that he would do. But at least he left those three films—EAST OF EDEN, REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE, and GIANT—they're shown over and over again.

SS: After EAST OF EDEN, you appeared onstage as Saint Joan in THE LARK, opposite Boris Karloff.

JH: He was such a wonderful man! I had seen him on stage years before in ARSENIC AND OLD LACE—so, to see him in that play and then to actually act with him in the theater was just a great experience. Boris was



LEFT: For THE HAUNTING (1963), Julie Harris (pictured with costar Richard Johnson) would have preferred making the character of Eleanor Lance considerably odder in appearance, but director Robert Wise would have none of it. CENTER: Eleanor is the focus of attention for haunted Hill House, which finally welcomes her into its ghostly embrace at THE HAUNTING's haunting conclusion. RIGHT: Harris played drug-addicted singer Betty Fraley in HARPER (1966), based on Ross Macdonald's first Lew Archer mystery, *The Moving Target* (1949). Her partners in crime were played by Strother Martin, Shelley Winters, and Robert Webber. BOTTOM RIGHT: Richard Davalos, James Dean, and Harris strike an energetic pose for the EAST OF EDEN publicity camera. Even in mid-flight, Davalos manages to keep an eye on the camera.

a very dear man and quite wonderful in his part as the Bishop. We had a very strong friendship and relationship. I really adored him.

SS: And you won a second Tony. You reprised Sally Bowles in the 1955 film of I AM A CAMERA, with Laurence Harvey.

JH: It was always a joy to work with Larry. I liked him very much. I really enjoyed the costumes in THE TRUTH ABOUT WOMEN, which we also did together. The great English costume designer, Cecil Beaton, who did the costumes for MY FAIR LADY, also designed the costumes for this film.

SS: In 1961, you costarred in the Hallmark Hall of Fame production of VICTORIA REGINA, with Basil Rathbone.

JH: Oh, Basil was a wonderful actor! He played Disraeli in VICTORIA REGINA. He also did THE LARK for Hallmark on television, in the same role that Boris Karloff played on stage. Basil was simply a wonderful man; a wonderful human being.

SS: You also starred in David Susskind's 1961 TV production of THE POWER AND THE GLORY, opposite Laurence Olivier.

JH: That was a very exhausting, terrible experience, because we got so far behind in the production. We'd rehearsed it for three weeks and then filmed it in a studio in Brooklyn. Well, the first day, they had some noise in the studio and they couldn't find out what it was or where it was coming from, so they ended up losing the whole day to this delay. With television schedules, you have this certain time frame in which to do the production. Well, of course, Laurence Olivier had to get back to England, so we had to literally film around the clock; actors were sleeping in the hallways. It was just a dreadful experience, a catastrophe of losing time.

SS: You played Grace Miller in REQUIEM FOR A HEAVYWEIGHT.

JH: Oh, I loved working with Anthony Quinn. There was this one scene in the original story. Mountain Rivera comes to Grace, who is a social worker, and she tries to get him a job. It doesn't work out, but they're at-

tracted to each other. He visits her at her apartment and they eventually get into bed together. The moment when they're going to make love, she turns the light out and—because he's so beaten up—he says, "You don't want to look at me, do you?" Well, after Tony said that, I said, "I can't do that! I can't! I wouldn't turn the light out! I think he's beautiful!" (Laughs) I said, "Anybody who looks at Tony Quinn is going to say, 'What a beautiful man!' I don't care if he's got a broken nose or what! I'm not going to turn the light out!" Well, they ended up changing the scene for me.

SS: THE HAUNTING was the 1963 adaptation of Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*, directed by Robert Wise. Because of the extremely disturbed nature of your character, Eleanor Lance, did you find this one of your tougher roles?

JH: Yes—and, as you say, very disturbing. We made the film in England, although it was a New England setting. It was a particularly difficult winter. We went through one of those black fogs. They were still burning coal in London, so on a bright, sunny Sunday morning the fog would suddenly make it look like night.

Trying to get to the studio, which was normally a half-hour drive, would take four or five hours because you couldn't see in front of you! It was not an easy film to make, but I enjoyed working with Mr. Wise very much. He was a very gentle, good man; very kind. And the others were all wonderful in the picture. Yet, for me, it was sort of a troubled time—just because, I think, Eleanor herself was so very troubled. Playing a part sometimes does that to you. One summer I played Blanche DuBois in A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE and I nearly had a nervous breakdown.

SS: Many of the terrors of Hill House are only suggested, never seen. In your opinion, is it indeed genuine apparitions or simply Eleanor's own guilt that causes her death?







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JH: No, we didn't. When I first came to the valley, to my little apartment near Warner Bros., Jimmy did come over that first evening and said, "Come outside, I have something to show you." I walked outside and he showed me a little red MG sports car that he'd bought; very beautiful. He said, "I'll take you for a ride." So I said, "Okay." Well, he took me up into the Hollywood hills—you know, where the roads are winding, and we were going very fast. But I just knew that if I'd said to him, "Please go slower," he'd have gone even faster! I just knew that about him! He was sort of—well, reckless, but also adventurous. There wasn't anything "ugly" about Jimmy, but he did take chances. He was like Tom Sawyer in a way. So I didn't dare him, and he eventually took me back home—and I lived to tell about it! (Laughs) I think, because I didn't complain, he respected me for that. We had a wonderful time working together. He was so inventive and I really just loved working with him. There were a lot of talented actors around, but Jimmy really was special. He was so unique—although I don't know whether he felt that, or how he thought of himself. I think the reaction to his work made him realize he was going to be on a special ride. I suppose some of it may have even gone to his head, because he pretended that his success wasn't going to change him. When he first called to talk to the head of Warner Bros., Jack Warner, he went in wearing blue jeans and no shirt. He wasn't going to show anybody that he recognized how important they were. He was just that way—very independent. Jimmy was also fascinated with directing and I think he would have eventually gone into that if he could've found the right material.

SS: Is it true that much of Dean's performance was improvised?

JH: Well, that was a quality that he had. He didn't change the script, but

he would enliven it and elaborate on it. He didn't just read lines. He would open it up, and Mr. Kazan allowed him to do it and encouraged him to do it.

SS: One of the most compelling scenes in the film comes when Cal gives his father, played by Raymond Massey, the money he earned. How much of this was Elia Kazan's direction and how much was James Dean?

JH: It was a combination. Mr. Kazan allowed Jimmy to rehearse that scene and when it came time to film, he just incorporated it into the final cut. Jimmy would say and do things that surprised Raymond Massey. They didn't hit it off. Jimmy offended him by his behavior and that made him perfect for the part. Elia Kazan kind of delighted in that they didn't like each other. (Laughs) Well, not that they didn't like each other, but that their behavior was so—far from congenial.

SS: What's your favorite scene in *EAST OF EDEN*?

JH: Oh, well, I love the ferris wheel scene! And I love the scene where Jimmy dismisses the nurse and then sits in the room with his father. I just love about every scene in the movie!

SS: Where were you when you first heard the news of James Dean's death?

JH: I don't remember if I heard it on the radio or read it in the paper, but I was in New York City at the time. I'd just had a baby in July. I was looking forward to him meeting my son and carrying on our friendship and I remember being very sad about it. He had such promise. I was looking forward to all the things that he would do. But at least he left those three films—*EAST OF EDEN*, *REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE*, and *GIANT*—they're shown over and over again.

SS: After *EAST OF EDEN*, you appeared onstage as Saint Joan in *THE LARK*, opposite Boris Karloff.

JH: He was such a wonderful man! I had seen him on stage years before in *ARSENIC AND OLD LACE*—so, to see him in that play and then to actually act with him in the theater was just a great experience. Boris was





LEFT: For *THE HAUNTING* (1963), Julie Harris (pictured with costar Richard Johnson) would have preferred making the character of Eleanor Lance considerably odder in appearance, but director Robert Wise would have none of it. CENTER: Eleanor is the focus of attention for haunted Hill House, which finally welcomes her into its ghostly embrace at *THE HAUNTING*'s haunting conclusion. RIGHT: Harris played drug-addicted singer Betty Fraley in *HARPER* (1966), based on Ross Macdonald's first Lew Archer mystery, *The Moving Target* (1949). Her partners in crime were played by Strother Martin, Shelley Winters, and Robert Webber. BOTTOM RIGHT: Richard Davalos, James Dean, and Harris strike an energetic pose for the *EAST OF EDEN* publicity camera. Even in mid-flight, Davalos manages to keep an eye on the camera.

a very dear man and quite wonderful in his part as the Bishop. We had a very strong friendship and relationship. I really adored him.

SS: And you won a second Tony. You reprised Sally Bowles in the 1955 film of *I AM A CAMERA*, with Laurence Harvey.

JH: It was always a joy to work with Larry. I liked him very much. I really enjoyed the costumes in *THE TRUTH ABOUT WOMEN*, which we also did together. The great English costume designer, Cecil Beaton, who did the costumes for *MY FAIR LADY*, also designed the costumes for this film.

SS: In 1961, you costarred in the Hallmark Hall of Fame production of *VICTORIA REGINA*, with Basil Rathbone.

JH: Oh, Basil was a wonderful actor! He played Disraeli in *VICTORIA REGINA*. He also did *THE LARK* for Hallmark on television, in the same role that Boris Karloff played on stage. Basil was simply a wonderful man; a wonderful human being.

SS: You also starred in David Susskind's 1961 TV production of *THE POWER AND THE GLORY*, opposite Laurence Olivier.

JH: That was a very exhausting, terrible experience, because we got so far behind in the production. We'd rehearsed it for three weeks and then filmed it in a studio in Brooklyn. Well, the first day, they had some noise in the studio and they couldn't find out what it was or where it was coming from, so they ended up losing the whole day to this delay. With television schedules, you have this certain time frame in which to do the production. Well, of course, Laurence Olivier had to get back to England, so we had to literally film around the clock; actors were sleeping in the hallways. It was just a dreadful experience, a catastrophe of losing time.

SS: You played Grace Miller in *REQUIEM FOR A HEAVYWEIGHT*.

JH: Oh, I loved working with Anthony Quinn. There was this one scene in the original story. Mountain Rivera comes to Grace, who is a social worker, and she tries to get him a job. It doesn't work out, but they're at-

tracted to each other. He visits her at her apartment and they eventually get into bed together. The moment when they're going to make love, she turns the light out and—because he's so beaten up—he says, "You don't want to look at me, do you?" Well, after Tony said that, I said, "I can't do that! I can't! I wouldn't turn the light out! I think he's beautiful!" (Laughs) I said, "Anybody who looks at Tony Quinn is going to say, 'What a beautiful man!'" I don't care if he's got a broken nose or what! I'm not going to turn the light out!" Well, they ended up changing the scene for me.

SS: *THE HAUNTING* was the 1963 adaptation of Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*, directed by Robert Wise. Because of the extremely disturbed nature of your character, Eleanor Lance, did you find this one of your tougher roles?

JH: Yes—and, as you say, very disturbing. We made the film in England, although it was a New England setting. It was a particularly difficult winter. We went through one of those black fogs. They were still burning coal in London, so on a bright, sunny Sunday morning the fog would suddenly make it look like night. Trying to get to the studio, which was normally a half-hour drive, would take four or five hours because you couldn't see in front of you! It was not an easy film to make, but I enjoyed working with Mr. Wise very much. He was a very gentle, good man; very kind. And the others were all wonderful in the picture. Yet, for me, it was sort of a troubled time—just because, I think, Eleanor herself was so very troubled. Playing a part sometimes does that to you. One summer I played Blanche DuBois in *A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE* and I nearly had a nervous breakdown.

SS: Many of the terrors of *Hill House* are only suggested, never seen. In your opinion, is it indeed genuine apparitions or simply Eleanor's own guilt that causes her death?

JH: She's so highly disturbed. Her mother has died and she's depressed and alone. Her whole psyche goes toward the doctor; he'd be the man that would save her. But, of course, that doesn't work out for her, so she's left floundering. Then, when she's in this house, where all the psychic disturbances are going on, this affects her. What happens is, she brings it on herself; her jarred nerves and instability bring on the car accident that kills her.

SS: There's an obvious lesbian interest that Theodora shows in Eleanor.

JH: That was in the book. In those days, the British censors didn't want there to be any indication of a sexual feeling or meaning, so Theodora couldn't put her hand on me or make any sort of gesture that might be misconstrued.

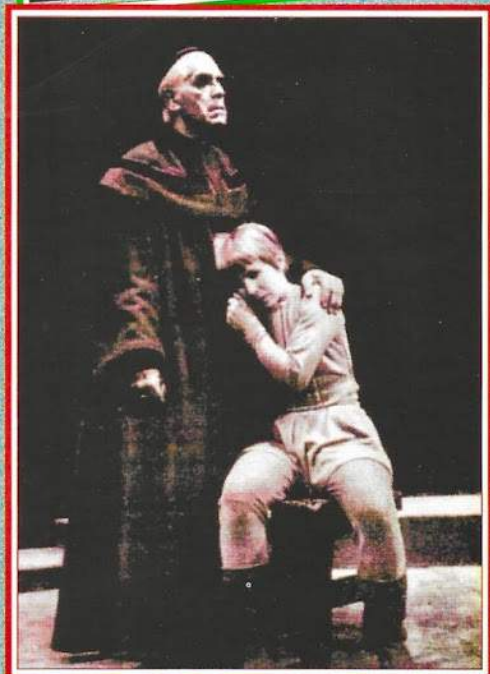
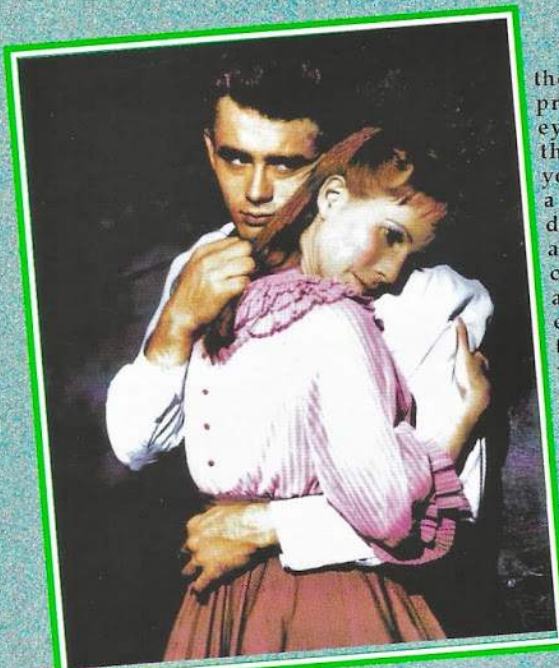
SS: What house was used for the filming?

JH: It was outside Stratford-on-Avon in England, although I forget the name of the house. It was an old 19th-century house, though part of it was probably 16th century. It was very ancient. It was a mansion that had been turned into a hotel.

SS: Were any of the interior scenes actually filmed in the house?







TOP: James Dean and Julie Harris in *EAST OF EDEN*. ABOVE: Harris starred on Broadway in *THE LARK* (1955) with horror great Boris Karloff.

JH: No, just the exteriors were filmed on location. The interior shots were done at Borhumbwood Studio outside London.

SS: The following year saw you receive a Tony Nomination for *MARATHON* '33.

JH: It was written by June Havoc, the sister of Gypsy Rose Lee. June was a child star of vaudeville and she later wrote a book called *Early Havoc*. In the book, she describes how she was billed as Dainty Baby June in vaudeville at the age of two, dancing on her toes. But, when she got to be about 13 or 14, she was no longer a "dainty" baby, and with vaudeville on its way out, she didn't get as much work. Her sister, Gypsy, became a star in burlesque, which was like the tail end of vaudeville and June was left out in

the cold. This was during the Depression, so in order to make money June entered these dance marathons. If you lasted—if you won, you got some money. Well, she was a dancer, although in marathon dancing, you just had to stagger around on the stage as long as you could. Some went on for as long as three months before they were eventually made illegal. She did three or four marathons and that's what she based the play on.

SS: *YOU'RE A BIG BOY, NOW* is something of a cult movie, isn't it?

JH: It was one of the first movies of Francis Coppola. He was very serious. I knew he was a director who knew exactly what he wanted. He was very...

SS: *Determined?*

JH: *Determined!* Yes! (Laughs) That's a good word.

SS: In your next film, 1966's *HARPER* with Paul Newman, did you do any special research for your role as Betty Fraley?

JH: Oh, well, I played an ex-drug addict and café singer—so no, I didn't do any special research. (Laughs) It was a wonderful film and a nice experience. I didn't get to know Paul Newman at all, though. He kept very much to himself.

SS: You starred with Marlon Brando and Elizabeth Taylor in 1967's *REFLECTIONS IN A GOLDEN EYE*, under the direction of John Huston. As in *THE HAUNTING*, the topic of homosexuality was touched upon. Wasn't this still rather a touchy subject matter for sixties audiences?

JH: Well, yes, it was. But Marlon's performance was so gorgeous, so understated, so subtle—it's very compelling for me to watch. I don't necessarily think it's a perfect movie, but it's very interesting and his performance is beautiful. I didn't think Robert Forster was quite the right type to play the boy, Private Williams. Really, the boy should have been a young blonde from the cornfields of Iowa, and Robert was sort of gypsylike. Other than that, though, the film has some wonderful performances.

SS: The movie takes place in Georgia. Where was it actually filmed?

JH: Italy! (Laughs) It should've been filmed in Georgia, but John Huston, Marlon, and Elizabeth all wanted to go to Europe. John Huston was not well. It was the beginning of his terrible emphysema. He disappointed me. He was using an actor, Zorro David, to play Anacleto, the houseboy for my character. Zorro was picked because he had such a beautiful face, but he had never acted before in his life. Well, Mr. Huston wasn't very kind to him the first day. Zorro was in a scene in which Anacleto, is drawing a peacock with the golden eye on the floor in my bedroom. He's talking to me about the painting. This was our first scene together, and Zorro was

frightened. He couldn't move. On top of that, Mr. Huston would tell him that he couldn't understand him and to speak clearer, but this only made Zorro more nervous. I was sitting in bed and didn't have anything to do, but his treatment of Zorro was so unkind. Finally I leapt out of bed and said, "What if he does it this way?" Mr. Huston just looked at me and said, "Well, you work on it and when you think you're ready, come and tell me." (Laughs) He's letting me direct the scene! Really! So, Zorro and I worked on it together until he eventually felt more comfortable about it. But that was disappointing to me. For a great director whose work I've always loved, like *THE MALTESE FALCON* and *THE TREASURE OF THE SIERRA MADRE*—both perfect pictures, gorgeously done—I was disappointed in him and his attitude towards actors. I'd be kept waiting for hours at a time, then the assistant director would come and say, "Oh, are you still here?" I would say, "Yes, I was called in for 10 o'clock," and he'd say, "Oh, well, we'll never get to your scenes today; go home." It was that kind of planning and programming, which was chaotic. It was not a happy time for me.

SS: You did a lot of TV in the sixties and seventies, including appearances on *TARZAN* and in the 1970 telefilm *HOW AWFUL ABOUT ALLAN*, which costarred Anthony Perkins and was directed by Curtis Harrington.

JH: I liked Anthony Perkins quite a lot. He was an extremely gifted actor.

SS: You also worked with James Stewart on his mystery series, *HAWKINS*.

JH: The first day, we were shooting at night. When I came to read my lines, the director said, "You and Mr. Stewart are going to walk down by this marina and the cameras are going to be beside you and—oh, by the way; Mr. Stewart, this is Julie Harris." That's the way we were introduced! (Laughs) The next minute, we were walking down by the marina, the camera was following me, and all I could think was, "Here I am, working with Jimmy Stewart!"

SS: In 1975, you starred in *THE HIDING PLACE*. The film focused on Dutch Christians helping the Jewish people during World War II. You followed this with the 1976 British production of *VOYAGE OF THE DAMNED*, a story centered on the 1939 persecution of a group of German-Jewish refugees.

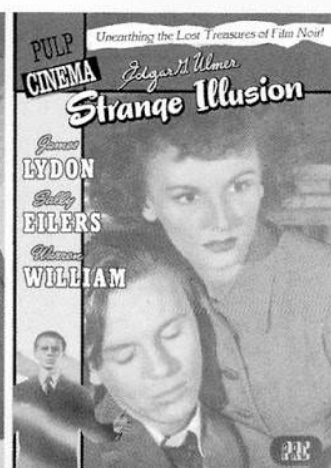
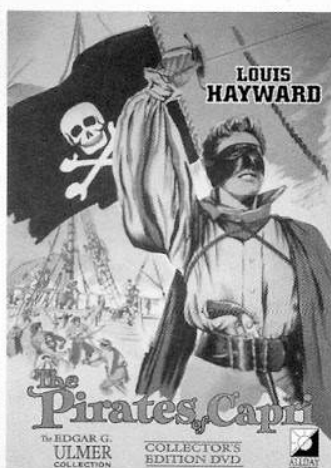
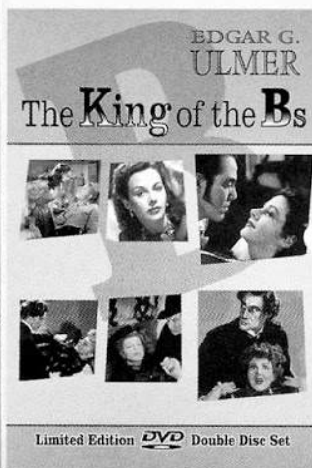
JH: Well, although I was still in my teens during the Second World War, I was always aware and would read about Hitler and the Nazis. After the war, probably after reading *The Diary of Anne Frank* and hearing about the Holocaust and the way people suffered because of their religion, and reading parts of *Mein Kampf* and seeing how Hitler set out to kill the Jewish population in Europe, I realized that we're living in a world where these

*Continued on page 81*





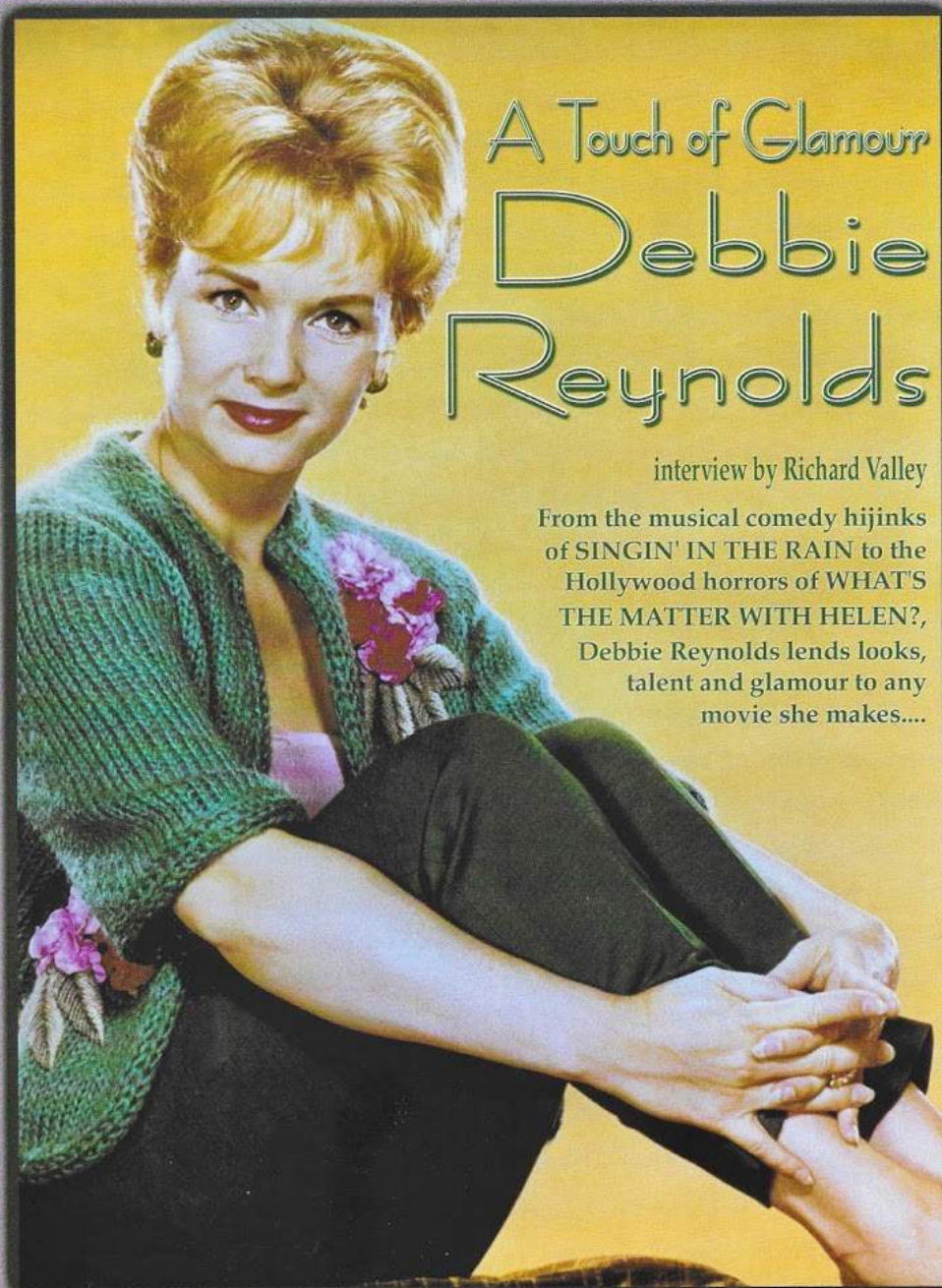
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# A Touch of Glamour Debbie Reynolds

interview by Richard Valley

From the musical comedy hijinks of *SINGIN' IN THE RAIN* to the Hollywood horrors of *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?*, Debbie Reynolds lends looks, talent and glamour to any movie she makes....



In the wake of the Oscar-winning *AN AMERICAN IN PARIS* (1951), *SINGIN' IN THE RAIN* (1952) was considered just another pleasant MGM song-and-dance fest. Over the years, though, the film (with Donald O'Connor, Debbie Reynolds, and Gene Kelly) has come to be regarded as Hollywood's great musical.

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—Kathy Seldon (Debbie Reynolds) in *SINGIN' IN THE RAIN* (1952)

Nothing could be further from Debbie Reynolds' own feelings about the industry in which she grew up than the wonderful Betty Comden and Adolph Green lines she spoke in what has come to be regarded as the greatest original Hollywood musical ever made—*SINGIN' IN THE RAIN* (1952). The star—still going strong some 36 years after she made her uncredited debut as a wedding guest in *JUNE BRIDE* (1948)—has devoted much of her life and income to preserving as much of Hollywood's history as one feisty, five-foot one-and-a-half inch movie star can manage.

Debbie Reynolds was born Mary Frances Reynolds in El Paso, Texas on April 1, 1932, and moved with her family to Burbank, California, eight years later. In 1948, she won the title of Miss Burbank of 1948 and was immediately put under contract by War-

ner Bros., rechristened "Debbie" by Jack Warner himself, and shoved before the cameras for the Bette Davis/Robert Montgomery comedy *JUNE BRIDE*. Only one more Warner Bros. film followed (1950's *THE DAUGHTER OF ROSIE O'GRADY*) before the studio dropped her and MGM picked her up.

Metro had a much better handle on how to handle their star-to-be, at once casting her in *THREE LITTLE WORDS* (1950), a musical biography of songsmiths Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby, played respectively by Fred Astaire and Red Skelton. Reynolds appeared as the original "Boop-a-Doop" girl, Helen Kane, lip-synching to Kane's recording of "I Wanna Be Loved by You" as she cavorted onstage with six-foot, three-inch Carleton Carpenter. Later that year, the Multi-and-Jeff-sized duo was reunited for *TWO WEEKS WITH LOVE*, performing what became a million-seller hit record—"Abba Dabba Honey-moon." A small role followed in *MR. IMPERIUM* (1951), a Lana Turner/Ezio Pinza romance, and then came *SINGIN' IN THE RAIN* and full-fledged stardom.

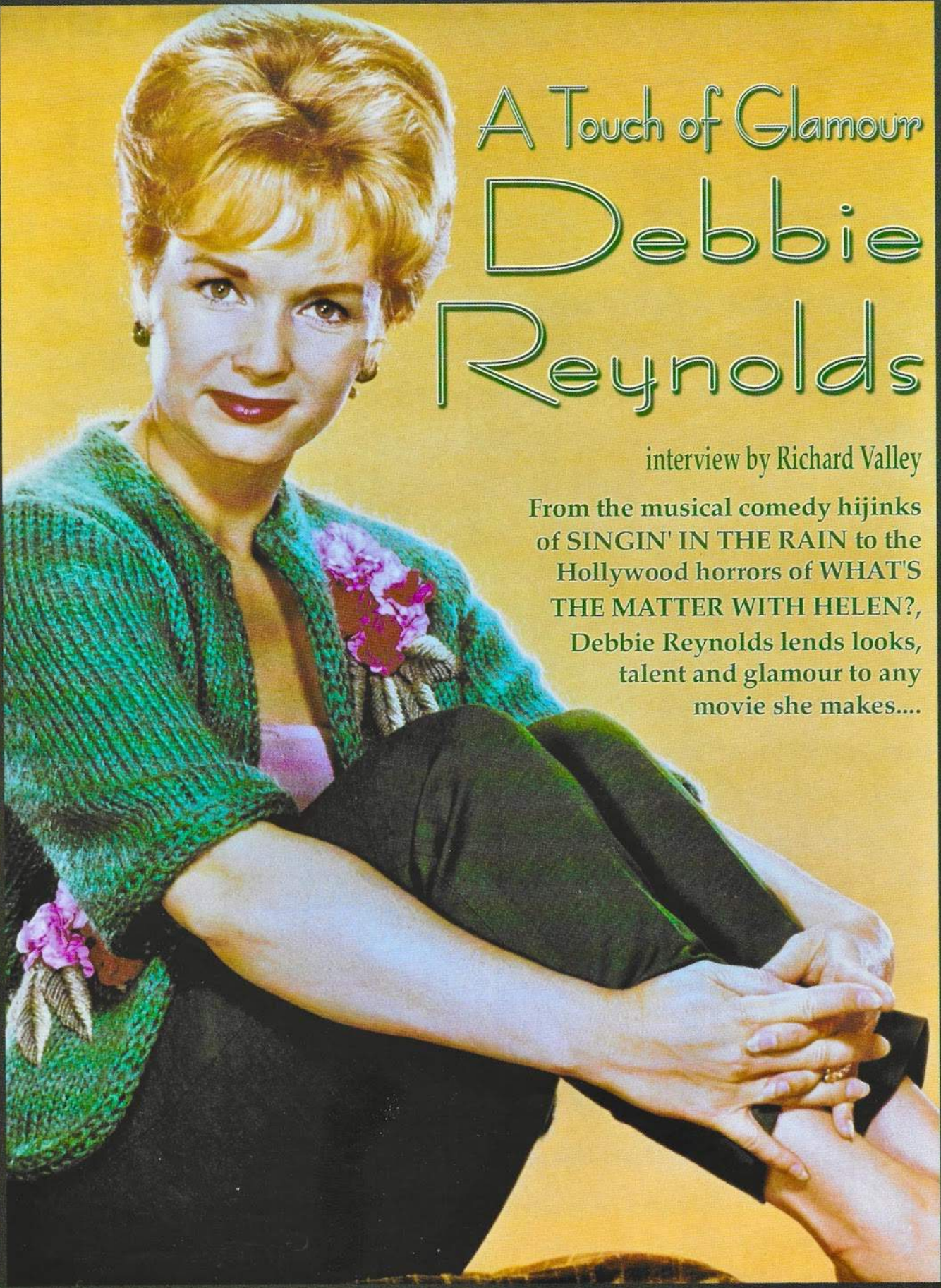
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Reynolds bounced back with one of her biggest hits when she costarred with Frank Sinatra in *THE TENDER TRAP* (1955). That same year, she married singer Eddie Fisher, setting the stage for one of the decade's most famous celebrity scandals when he left her (and children Carrie and Todd) two years later for Elizabeth Taylor. Public sympathy increased her popularity tremendously and her career skyrocketed. By then, she'd had another of her biggest film hits—*TAMMY AND THE BACHELOR* (1957)—and a hit record to go with it.

Reynolds went on to star in *SAY ONE FOR ME* (1959) with Bing Crosby; *IT STARTED WITH A KISS* and *THE GAZEBO* (both 1959) with Glenn Ford; *THE RAT RACE* (1960) with Tony Curtis; *HOW THE WEST WAS WON* (1962) with Gregory Peck, James Stewart, and an all-star cast; *THE UNSINKABLE MOLLY BROWN* (1964, for which she received an Oscar nomination); *GOOD-BYE CHARLIE* (1964), again with Curtis; *THE SINGING NUN* (1966); and





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LEFT: WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN? (1971) gave Debbie Reynolds the opportunity to sing and dance on the silver screen again. CENTER: Adelle (Reynolds) tries to recreate Helen (Shelley Winters) in the image of movie-star Marion Davies. RIGHT: Reynolds performed a slinky tango with dancer Swen Swenson for another of HELEN's musical moments. PAGE 55 BOTTOM RIGHT: Reynolds as THE SINGING NUN (1966).

DIVORCE AMERICAN STYLE (1967), with Dick Van Dyke. In 1971, she once again dramatized a fascinating piece of Hollywood history—the talkie revolution in the 1930s—in the horror film WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN (1971), costarring with Shelley Winters, Dennis Weaver, Micheal MacLiammoir, and old friend Agnes Moorehead.

In recent years, the unsinkable Debbie Reynolds has concentrated on Broadway (1973's IRENE) nightclub work, the occasional film role (1996's MOTHER and 1997's IN AND OUT), television (a recurring role on WILL & GRACE), and her efforts to preserve Hollywood's history. Recently, she took time out from her schedule to speak to *Scarlet Street* about her busy life and career . . .

*Scarlet Street:* You've become sort of the unofficial keeper of Hollywood history.

**Debbie Reynolds:** (Laughs) Well, the studios started not to care. MGM had its first huge auction in 1970 and so that was the first dump of all the memorabilia—meaning film clips, meaning sheet music, meaning still pictures, meaning anything that was in the way of space to rent. They just wanted to

make money and they were liquidators. They lost sight of history and they lost sight of preservation. I cared about everything! I cared about the trees on Sunset Boulevard being torn down; I tied my car to one with a chain because they were sawing them all down to plant new trees. They said two trees were diseased, so they cut down 80 trees! So this just goes back a long time. I care about saving our history. Our plant life, our land—you can't replace it.

**SS:** And you can't replace movies once they've vanished, either.

**DR:** So it started at the MGM auction—I just started buying memorabilia from what I felt were historic films—meaning Oscar-winning films or the most popular films. Not every film can win an Academy Award, but it doesn't mean they're not equal to it. There's only one Academy Award and maybe 20 nominations for Best Film. Second was the 20th Century Fox auction, about five or six years later. Fox did the same thing.

**SS:** The MGM auction was famous, but you never hear very much about the Fox one.

**DR:** That's because MGM was so huge—acres and acres of land! You had Lot One, you had Lot Two, Lot Three, Lot

Four, all jam packed with films and props and costumes. They just stuck everything in buildings and then covered it up and left it—not thinking at the time that the industry would change to such a degree that we'd have DVDs and videos; there was no such thing at the time. The studios had everything. We were not allowed to buy our costumes or to borrow them when we made the films. They were so fussy and particular. They saved everything; yes, they saved it, but they didn't see the end. People like L. B. Mayer—they didn't see the end of their control. They didn't see European takeovers; they didn't see how this was all going to come to an end. Zanuck didn't see it. Mayer didn't see it. They didn't care about preservation.

**SS:** Have you been able to track down any of the costumes from your own films?

**DR:** I don't care about my costumes. I only care about really great films. I was lucky to be in SINGIN' IN THE RAIN, so I bought material from SINGIN' IN THE RAIN—but I also collected from everybody else's films. Every creative person—that's what I bought. I didn't buy Debbie Reynolds. I know her very well! (Laughs) I have a lot of

LEFT: Reynolds had previously appeared in THREE LITTLE WORDS (1950) in the small role of Helen Kane, but didn't perform with top-billed Fred Astaire. They were reunited in THE PLEASURE OF HIS COMPANY (1961, also with Lilli Palmer and Tab Hunter), but the film wasn't a musical. CENTER: Reynolds and Carleton Carpenter perform "I Wanna Be Loved by You" in THREE LITTLE WORDS. RIGHT: Reynolds, Edmund Purdom, Evelyn Varden, and Jane Powell offer sympathy while Steve Reeves suffers from razor burn in ATHENA (1954).





So you met someone and now you know how it feels.  
Goody, Goody!



her costumes and I have a lot of her clothes—in case anyone would like to buy any, I've got 'em. You know, Warner Bros. almost went the same way as MGM and Fox with an auction. They were going to sell all their stuff. They had already moved the furniture out to the parking lot, ready for auction! Producers like Ross Hunter and set decorators and directors—when they found out that Warners Bros. was going to sell everything, they had a meeting with the New York people who at the time ran Warner Bros. and they saved the collection. Warner Bros. canceled the auction because so many producers said, "No, we don't want to sell it," and the directors said, "No, we don't want to sell; we're still making films. Why are we going to sell it? Let's make good films instead of holding an auction." So Warners, thank God, saved their collection and it still exists.

**SS:** A pity no one was able to stop MGM.  
**DR:** Well, I watched them burn film clips—including outtakes, numbers they had dropped from different films, dances with Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly. I saw them burning them in these tubs. I went over and said, "What are you doing?" They said, "Well, we don't have room to store this. They don't want to auction this stuff. Nobody wants this stuff." I said, "Please don't burn it, I'll back my car up." They said, "Debbie, we have our orders"—and they burned it in front of me! Me begging and crying, and they dumped the sheet music and all of the arrangements on the freeway—where they were building the Hollywood freeway to the airport—and they just dumped it as fill!

**SS:** Incredible! You've made a number of pictures that touch on Hollywood history. You mentioned *SINGIN' IN THE RAIN*, which concerns the end of silent films and the beginning of talkies, but you also made a film about Hollywood in the thirties—*WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?* Like *SINGIN' IN THE RAIN*, it's a fine film.

**DR:** Isn't that extraordinary that you know that's good? I produced that! I

had a deal with NBC and part of it was to produce a film. They put up \$750,000 and I hired Marty Ransohoff to be on the set, but I actually produced it; I put up the money for that picture. Nobody knows that.

**SS:** Now everyone will!

**DR:** I love that film. I cast Shelley Winters, who at the time was completely—well, her psychiatrist told her not to play a woman having a nervous breakdown because at the time she was having a nervous breakdown! (Laughs) But nobody knew that, and so all through the film she drove all of us insane! She became the person in the film. It was a difficult film to make, but I love that film. Curtis Harrington, the director, was very proud and is still proud. We talk all the time.

**SS:** Curtis said she was extremely jealous over how popular you were on the set.

**DR:** Well, I picked her up for work every day! (Laughs) I picked her up! I was driving one morning on Santa Monica Boulevard and ahead of me was a woman wearing only a nightgown, trying to flag down a ride. Well, it was Shelley! I couldn't believe it! I said, "Shelley, why aren't you at home waiting for me?" She said, "I thought I was late."

**SS:** (Laughs) Well, she's good in the film.

**DR:** She was very good, but she's the kind of actress who becomes the part she's playing. That's why the psychiatrist didn't want her to play a mentally unstable woman. And not only was she playing an unstable woman, but she was playing a murderess. I call her Killer to this day!

**SS:** In the end, she kills you. You must have been afraid to turn your back.

**DR:** The truth of it is—she won't remember any of it, but someone put a real knife where the fake knife was. It was a prop knife and I had a dream about it the night before. I said to myself, "Oh, she's so gone you'd better check that knife and make sure it's not real." And I went in and the prop knife, which recesses into itself when you stab someone, was gone and a real knife was there. I went to the prop man and said, "What's going on here?" He said, "Nothing! Everything's fine!" I said, "There's a real knife there for this shot." He said, "You're wrong, Debbie." I said, "Excuse me! I'm going to be the recipient of that knife in a few minutes. It's a real knife!" And it just blew him away, of course. Who changed it? Well, that's up for grabs. (Laughs)

**SS:** Most movie stars shy away from horror films. You not only starred in one, but produced it.

**DR:** Well, I'd read the book. It was called *Best of Friends*. Curtis Harrington had brought it to me and I loved it. I thought that the book was a mystery and musical in a way, and that the whole relationship between the two women was fascinating. The problem was, Otto

Preminger at the time was making a movie called *SUCH GOOD FRIENDS*, and he entered into a lawsuit and fought me on the title. I had to change mine to *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?*, although I didn't want to change it; I wanted *BEST OF FRIENDS*. It was a battle; it cost money. I tried to keep the title of the book.

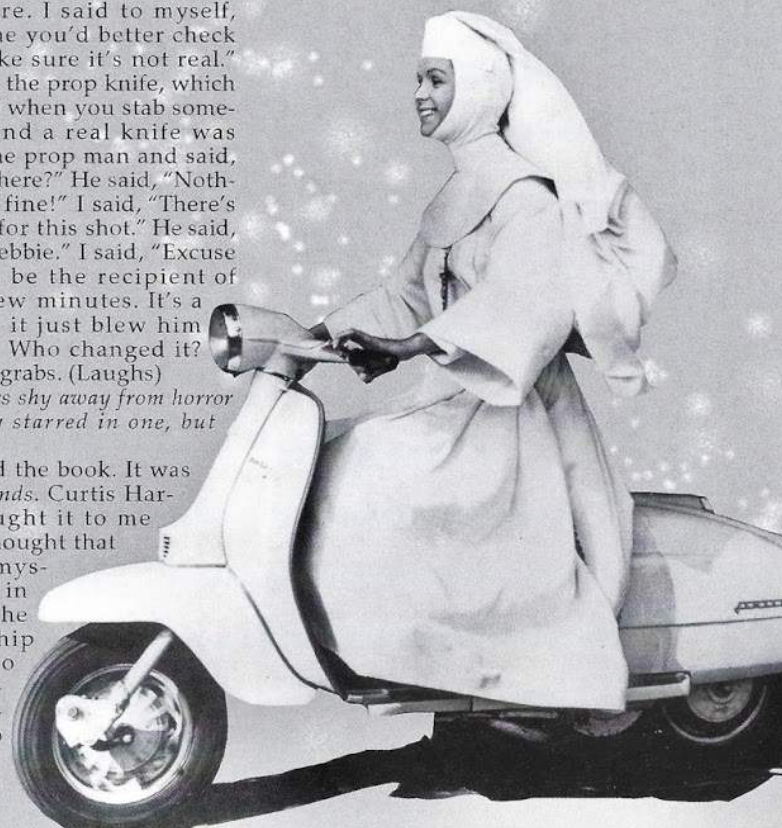
**SS:** When Bette Davis made *WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE?*, it trapped her for several years in horror films. Did you think that might happen to you?

**DR:** I didn't care. I loved the project and that would never have entered my mind. It was very unexpected for a Debbie Reynolds type to make that kind of film. I wanted to make a dramatic film. I'm not known as a great dramatic actress, so I wanted to make a film that would show my ability as an actress and also bring in dancing—and do it in a horror picture. It wasn't a huge hit, unfortunately, so nobody remembers it. It's amazing that you speak of it!

**SS:** It's an extraordinary film.

**DR:** I think it is, too. I thought it had real qualities and I worked my ass off on it, to buy it, to put up the money for it and then to lose it. Years later I lost control of all ownership, because they went into bankruptcy; I was on the road surviving my amazing life and my accountant didn't challenge the bankruptcy. He didn't go there, didn't read through the letter, didn't think it was anything important—'cause he was an idiot. So unfortunately, neither Curtis nor I have any right in it. Now we have DVDs and videos and neither Curtis nor I have any participation, which is not fair. But I mostly loved the project.

**SS:** You really should have been contacted to do an audio commentary or featurette when the film came out on DVD.







LEFT: THE UNSINKABLE MOLLY BROWN (1964), which teamed Reynolds with Harve Presnell was among the last of the great Metro musicals. RIGHT: "Kill the wabbit! Kill the wabbit!" Adelle (Reynolds) begins to realize WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?—she's crazy! BOTTOM LEFT: Reynolds reunited with Bette Davis. PAGE 57 BOTTOM RIGHT: One of Reynolds's most popular films—and one that gave her a hit song—was TAMMY AND THE BACHELOR (1957).

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SS: Curtis Harrington is famous for his early, experimental films.

DR: Well, you see, Curtis was known for his eccentricity and odd direction. He's got a wonderful, quirky mind and he looks at things through different-colored glasses. I wanted that, because I think of things normally; I look at life very square. I was brought up in the industry and my life is totally that, now, but I come from a very basic background. I don't have those same eyeglasses he looks through. He's got a different mind; he was perfect for that film. I wanted him! I paid him enough! I chose him and I love him. I think he's wonderful. He's not at all me and, well, you don't want a you. You don't go out and hire yourself. You want the best

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DR: Gene was a brilliant talent, an exacting master, and a great teacher. We worked so very hard on SINGIN' IN THE RAIN. Donald O'Connor was a great all-over talent, with a fun, wonderful personality. He was a good friend. We did an act together only two years ago; we toured and everybody loved us. SS: How much time and effort and just plain sweat goes into making a number like SINGIN' IN THE RAIN's "Good Morning" look so completely effortless?

DR: Well, that's the sign of a good number—that an enormous amount of work and pain doesn't show. It was a very hard number. We would shoot from eight in the morning till 11 at night, 40 takes per shot. Gene was never happy with the take, so you had to do it over and over and over again. It was endless agony. But it turned out to be brilliant, so it was well worth it. I was a young girl; Gene was the genius. Well, he wasn't alone. He had Stanley Donen as codirector, and a wonderful story by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, and Roger Edens and Arthur Freed—they made the film, too, but it was headed by Gene. Gene did it! Gene Kelly was SINGIN' IN THE RAIN.

SS: Before SINGIN' IN THE RAIN, you'd played only supporting roles.

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SS: Making SINGIN' IN THE RAIN, did you know it would become a classic?

DR: Well, Gene Kelly knew it! And Stanley Donen and the writers knew it. But the public didn't take to it at once; it was not timely at the time. I have no idea why it wasn't a huge hit when it opened. Later, it was picked up by students and teachers in colleges and in high schools and in drama classes. It was teachers teaching it and showing the young people what they thought were classic films that established it. The intellectuals, shall we say, are the people who could look at an entertainment and say, "Now, that's a classic film!" Thank God!

SS: You starred with Bette Davis in THE CATERED AFFAIR.

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SS: Then there's Bing Crosby, with whom you starred in SAY ONE FOR ME.

DR: Bing Crosby was a huge star. Wonderful singer. He was a strong man, perhaps too strong and exacting.

SS: You've mentioned Fred Astaire...

DR: A gentle, great talent and a gentle creature, a gentle man. I'd say a gentle man. He was very kind. And you mustn't forget Glenn Ford. You shouldn't forget him; he's still alive. He was a boy and still is a boy and much loved and shouldn't be forgotten. He was a really good actor, but he goes unrecognized. We made IT STARTED WITH A KISS and THE GAZEBO together. THE GAZEBO is not my favorite film. We didn't have a really good script. I thought

it was very lightweight, but I thought we were all just charming! (Laughs) I loved GOODBYE CHARLIE, with Walter Matthau and Tony Curtis. I think that's an unrecognized and very funny movie.

SS: And quite an acting challenge. You played a womanizing man who's been killed and reincarnated as a woman.

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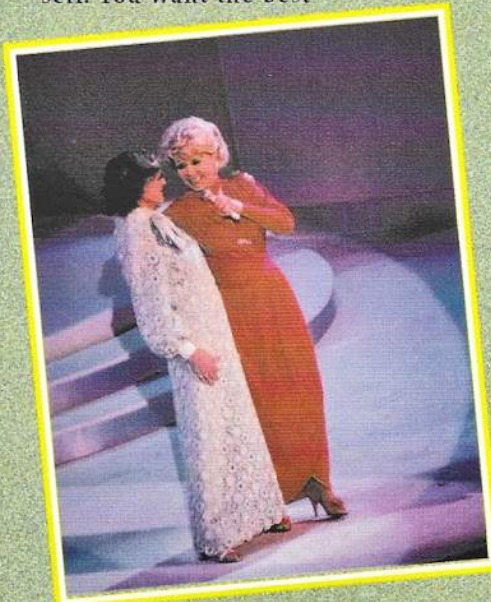
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LEFT: Helen (Shelley Winters) makes one of many tentative gestures—this time with a blood-soaked hand—toward Adelle (Debbie Reynolds) in *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?* (1971). RIGHT: Helen visits Sister Alma (Agnes Moorehead) to confess her sins, which include killing her husband and a man she mistook for a murderer. PAGE 59 TOP LEFT: Auntie Roo (Shelley Winters) freezes in horror at the sight of her dead daughter in *WHOEVER SLEW AUNTIE ROO* (1972). PAGE 59 BOTTOM RIGHT: The Boy (Michael Burns) clearly isn't properly attired for *THAT COLD DAY IN THE PARK* (1969).

## HORROR HAGS

*Continued from page 45*

secrets. Considering Harrington's friendship with director James Whale, it's hard not to pick up an extra chill from the film's attempted swimming pool murder and Terry's later freakout (suicide bid?) where he runs from the house and leaps into the pool. In every sense, there's an inescapable feeling that we're getting a portrait of the city from someone who knows where all the bodies are buried—or floating.

On a much lower level is the 1981 William Asher opus, *NIGHT WARNING*, a film that might win the award for the largest number of alternate titles: *MOMMA'S BOY*; *THE EVIL PROTÉGÉ*; *NIGHTMARE MAKER*; *THRILLED TO DEATH*; and *BUTCHER, BAKER, NIGHTMARE MAKER*. That's probably the only award it might win, though—except for persons with keen interests in seeing Susan Tyrrell on a murder spree or Jimmy McNichol's naked backside. (As with the shot of John Savage's rear in *THE KILLING KIND*, the latter comes as a result of an adult barging in while he's showering.) *NIGHT WARNING* is definitely a distant cousin to *THE KILLING KIND*, with obsessive mother love at its center, but it's a much less thoughtful, much less accomplished film. It's lurid and cheesy, but it's also peculiarly fascinating—not in the least because of its pedigree.

William Asher is best known for his AIP Beach Party movies, his amazingly prolific work in television, and having been married to Elizabeth Montgomery, star of his most famous TV series, *BEWITCHED* (1964-1972). At the time of *NIGHT WARNING*, Asher hadn't made a theatrical film since the abysmal *FIREBALL 500* (1966). And it shows. If it weren't for the language, nudity, and gore, *NIGHT WARNING* could easily pass for a TV show. What is interesting about his position in the director's chair is finding the producer/creative consultant and occasional director of *BEWITCHED*—a series simply brimming with gay characters, gay cast members, and gay undercurrents—helming this surprisingly progay exploitation film.

In *NIGHT WARNING*, we find a sympathetic, non-clichéd portrayal of a gay basketball coach (Steve Eastin), who not only doesn't have to be killed off before the movie's ending, but more or less functions as the hero,

since his intervention saves the day. Equally remarkable is the fact that, when Coach Landers' secret is exposed and he resigns his teaching position, his protégé Billy Lynch (McNichol) remains his loyal friend. That's especially remarkable since Billy's protégé status—and his apparent virginity—makes his own sexuality suspect. At the other end of the scale, we find raging homophobia from both Billy's Aunt Cheryl (Tyrrell) and Detective Joe Carlson (a lip-smackingly nasty performance by Bo Svenson), who is "investigating" the killing of a TV repairman (Caskey Swaim) by Aunt Cheryl, who claims he tried to rape her. The flaw in her story—the repairman was the coach's lover. Finding this out, Carlson threatens lynching as an alternative to the coach's resignation, spins a wild case involving Billy killing the repairman during a lover's quarrel, and refuses to hear any evidence that won't allow him to pin the murder on a "fag." It's typical of the movie that the two violently homophobic characters are also the least likable. Even Carlson's coworkers find the man repellent.

That's the tone of *NIGHT WARNING* on that level, but the rest of the film is crude exploitation and no mistake. The movie opens with a lame ripoff of the cut-brakelines-mountain-road business from Hitchcock's *FAMILY PLOT* (1976), here used to kill off Billy's parents, leaving him in the care of Aunt Cheryl. It will come as no surprise to anyone familiar with films of this type that the "surprises" of the script—who tampered with the brakes and the truth of Billy's parentage—are very much nonsurprises, but it hardly matters in the scheme of things. Apart from the *Tiger Beat* level of appeal from McNichol, the movie's basically an over-the-top vehicle for Tyrrell. At 36, she didn't really qualify for hagdom, but her performance is firmly in the mould of her more aged predecessors, while the film itself is almost certainly "inspired" by *THE KILLING KIND*. A terrific personality probably best known for her performances in such cult films as Jed Johnson's *ANDY WARHOL'S BAD* (1977), Richard Elfman's *FORBIDDEN ZONE* (1989), and John Waters' *CRY BABY* (1990), Tyrrell tackles her horror assignment head-on, making the ludicrous junk and the inane bloodbath the film ultimately turns into good trashy fun.

*NIGHT WARNING* actually presents Tyrrell as not unattractive at the onset—just a little frowzy and utterly lacking in social skills. When she dolls herself up to come





onto the TV repairman, the most appalling thing about her is her clumsy desperation. "I need a man," she tells him, raising her skirt to give him a good look, like some terminally awkward adolescent. In fact, when he rejects her advances, her murderous attack has much the same air. It's the vicious act of a spoiled child. However, as the movie progresses, she becomes ever more dowdy, finally looking much older than her 36 years when she embarks on her wholesale killing binge. Mayhem and mass murder take a lot out of you.

Tyrrell holds the film together, but only barely. By its third act—with McNichol staggering around in a stupor from seemingly nonstop doses of doped milk—*NIGHT WARNING* has toppled over into the realm of unintentional hilarity. Future *NEWHART* (1982-1990) regular Julia Duffy (as Billy's girlfriend) proves harder to kill than Jason Voorhees, surviving a clubbing with a meat tenderizer, having her head bashed in with a rock, and apparently drowning. (Rasputin would have envied her resilience!) Other characters—on the receiving end of Aunt Cheryl's *FRIDAY THE 13TH* (1980) inspired machete—are made of less stern stuff and expire without a struggle. Aunt Cheryl herself is more in the Jason mould, doing the traditional "she's not really dead" schtick when she finally gets her comeuppance. High art, it ain't, but it's also never dull.

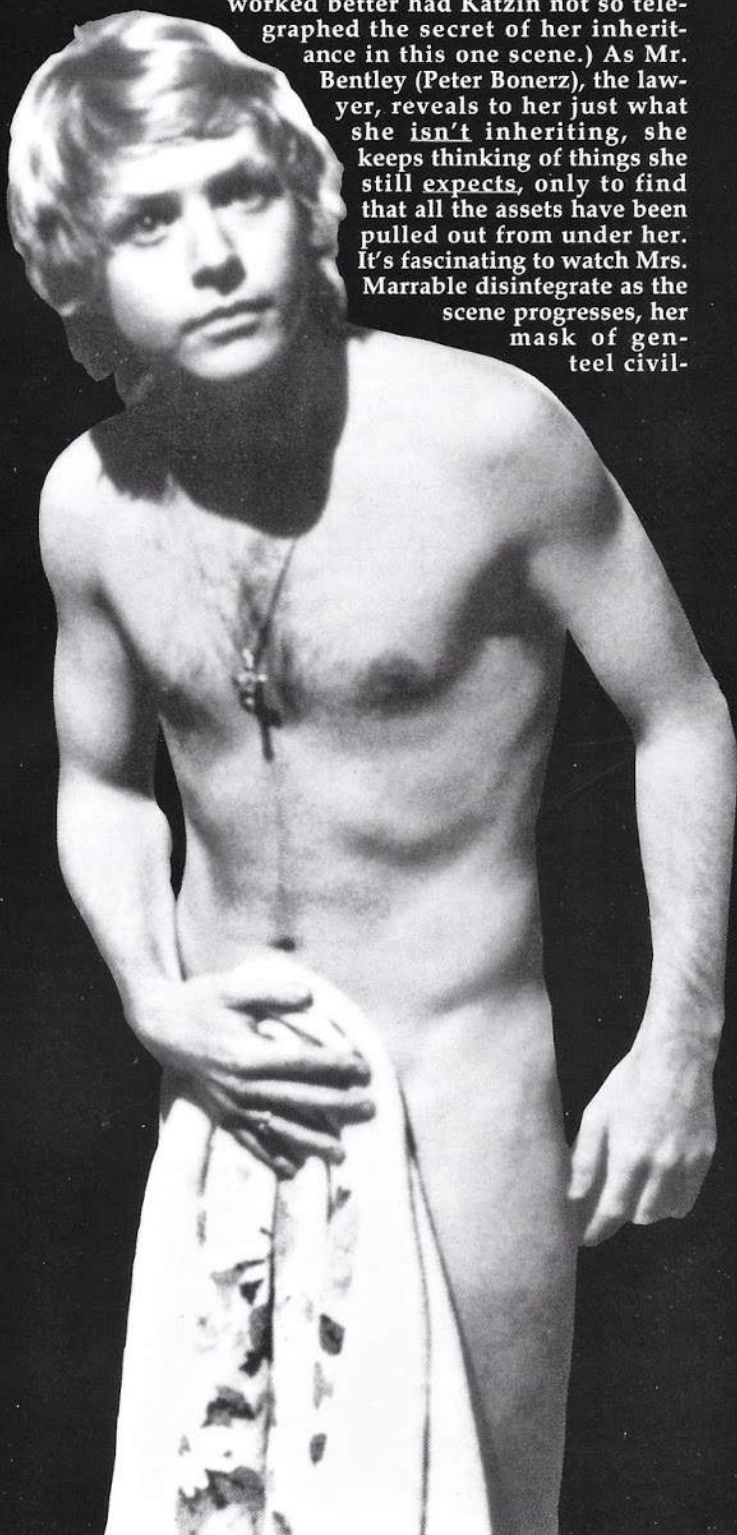
The same year *THAT COLD DAY IN THE PARK* took things off on a side street, Robert Aldrich returned to the more traditional field with *WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO AUNT ALICE?*. Unfortunately, Aldrich turned over the directing chores to Lee H. Katzin, best known for his TV work on such shows as *BRANDED*; *THE WILD, WILD WEST*; *MISSION IMPOSSIBLE*; and *IT TAKES A THIEF*. Nothing about his work evidenced a flair for the macabre—and *AUNT ALICE* offers little further proof that this was his forte. Not that Katzin's handling of the film is bad—it merely lacks a feeling for the genre. Even with frequent Aldrich cinematographer Joseph Biroc on hand, the results—while far from without merit—too often look like a TV movie, an aspect of *AUNT ALICE* that is likely exacerbated by television writer Theodore Epstein's screenplay. Epstein had only one other feature film to his credit, and after *AUNT ALICE* he quickly beat it back to the safety of *MARCUS WELBY, M.D.*.

Aldrich's particular success with *WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO AUNT ALICE?* lay in casting two less than young great stage stars—Geraldine Page and Ruth Gordon—and pitting them against each other à la Davis and Crawford. Though both actresses had been in movies, they were better known for theater work. For that matter, Gordon—who had just started on the serious movie phase of her career in Roman Polanski's *ROSEMARY'S*

*BABY* (1968)—was as well known for her writing skills in collaboration with husband Garson Kanin as for her acting ability. Whatever else about the movie may be considered a near-miss, the performances of these stage veterans were dead-on.

Page is the undeniable star of the piece. From today's vantage point, it's hard to imagine anyone outdoing Gordon in terms of scenery-chewing, but Page has the edge in this particular contest. Her character, Claire Marrable, is a delightful outrage from the film's opening moment, in which she helps herself to the flowers from her late husband's funeral tributes. This, however, pales in comparison to her subsequent wave of theatrics when she learns that the old boy apparently left her nothing but a mountain of debts and a few keepsakes that she doesn't want. (There's a final twist to this that would have

worked better had Katzin not so telegraphed the secret of her inheritance in this one scene.) As Mr. Bentley (Peter Bonerz), the lawyer, reveals to her just what she isn't inheriting, she keeps thinking of things she still expects, only to find that all the assets have been pulled out from under her. It's fascinating to watch Mrs. Marrable disintegrate as the scene progresses, her mask of genteel civil-





ity slipping away just a little more with each piece of bad news. "Of course, Mr. Marrable bequeathed his personal possessions to you, including his watch, his gold cufflinks, his briefcase with all its contents," Bentley helpfully volunteers, causing the last vestige of Mrs. Marrable's gentility to vanish. "He lost his cufflinks! The watch disappeared between trips to the hospital! I have his rusty dagger, his stamp album that he hasn't looked at in years, and his boyhood butterfly collection. All this is mine, is it? To keep? Plus, the shirt of my back, I suppose!" Mrs. Marrable rails as—in a fit of pique—the end of the world comes for the butterfly collection, which leads to the question, "How am I going to live?"

The answer isn't very long in coming. The scene switches to Arizona and Claire Marrable leading her housekeeper into the desert night for a spot of moonlight gardening. Strange how the housekeeper—or the gardener, Juan (Martin Garralaga), come to that—doesn't question the size and shape of the hole for her employer's latest pine tree, but that's the way the film has it. Mrs. Marrable drops her light, demands it be picked up and, taking advantage of her victim's position, cheerfully bashes her brains in with a handy rock before burying her with the tree's roots—having, of course, emptied her bank account in advance! Well, it's a living—and a fairly lucrative one, too, if we judge by the row of thriving pines that follow the credits. Mrs. Marrable's horticultural efforts certainly impress Juan, who is digging the hole for yet another . . . planting. "And don't forget to leave ample room for the roots. My gardening magazine says it never hurts to make the hole too deep," she advises him. "You have a very green thumb! Yes, your pine trees grow good," enthuses Juan.

In keeping with the film's penchant for great ladies of the stage in its cast, Claire Marrable's next target, Mrs. Tinsley, is played by none other than Broadway's original Linda Loman (1949's *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*) and Big Mama (1955's *CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF*)—Mildred Dunnock. The actress is handed a splendid little role as Edna Tinsley, the mousey housekeeper whose inherent greed has prompted her to turn over her life savings to Mrs. Marrable so that her mythical stock broker can invest it. Of course, since the money is out of her hands, Miss Tinsley—apart from a certain amusement value as someone to browbeat—is of no use to her employer as anything other than fertilizer. What Mrs. Marrable hasn't reckoned on, though, is that someone might actually be curious when Miss Tinsley disappears.

Enter Ruth Gordon as Alice Dimmock—the new housekeeper. Alice is a bit different from Mrs. Marrable's usual choices—understandably so, since Alice is not only playing at being a housekeeper, but also at being a detective. The film errs in a number of other areas—especially as concerns a pointless, supposedly ironic subplot involving both Mrs. Marrable and her nephew, George Lawson (Peter Brandon), manipulating each other over their nonexistent wealth, and the clumsy plot device of Mrs. Marrable's very unwelcome new neighbors (Rosemary Forsyth and Michael Barbera) and a stray dog that just lives to dig up pine trees. However, it's rarely off the mark when it comes to the interplay between Page and Gordon. Watching these two old pros manipulate each other is an unqualified delight.

The script even boasts sufficient wit to allow Mrs. Marrable to recognize qualities in Alice that she didn't find in her other housekeepers. When Alice's vain attempt to warn her nephew, Mike Darrah (Robert Fuller), that she won't be able to meet him the next morning gives the game away, Mrs. Marrable seems

genuinely grieved over the "betrayal." "What a fraud you are!" she cries. "You come into my house in the guise of a faithful companion and you want to utterly destroy me!"

No sooner are the gloves off about the murder than Mrs. Marrable tells Alice, "You could have lasted quite a few years." "You expect me to be flattered?" asks Alice. "I expected a little loyalty! It isn't often that I find someone whose company I enjoy—truly enjoy! I saw many happy years ahead for both of us. You are the only mistake I made." "Didn't you ever think you'd be found out?" wonders Alice. "No! And I won't be," reasons Mrs. Marrable. "You gave yourself away," notes Alice. "To you? You are a dead woman," Mrs. Marrable announces coldly. "Oh, no. I'm alive! I'm very much alive—and I'm not gonna be your next victim!" ripostes Alice.

With that exchange, the movie shifts into high gear, offering a kind of geriatric cat fight, an apparent murder, a little surprise, and a kind of homage to *PSYCHO* (1960), before coming to a somewhat anticlimactic finale with the aforementioned "surprise" revelation about Mrs. Marrable's inheritance. Once Gordon disappears from the scene, the problem is that Page has no one of her own calibre to play off and has to carry the burden of the ending. It's a pity, too, because when she and Gordon hold the screen, *WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO AUNT ALICE?* is in the running for a secure place in the hagdom pantheon. As it stands, however, it's more a fascinatingly flawed footnote to the genre.

High on the list of legendary bad films is 1970's *FLESH FEAST*, which more properly might be called notorious rather than legendary. Nudist/film-school-teacher/first-time-director Brad F. Grinter's unbelievably awful movie would lie at the bottom of anyone's schlock pile were it not for the novelty value of its star—and at least partial financier—Veronica Lake.

It's disconcerting to realize that Lake's period of cinematic credibility only ran from 1941 with a showy role in *I WANTED WINGS* to 1946 with her penultimate teaming with Alan Ladd in the *film noir* thriller *THE BLUE DAHLIA*. After that, it was apparent that Paramount had lost interest, just marking time till her contract ran out. The former Constance Ockleman from Brooklyn had had her moment in the sun, leaving a career that rested on a handful of films—*SULLIVAN'S TRAVELS* (1941), *I MARRIED A WITCH* (1942), *THIS GUN FOR HIRE* (1942), *THE GLASS KEY* (1942), and *THE BLUE DAHLIA*. It was more her sexiness and unique hairstyle that assured her a legacy as one of Hollywood's great stars than her body of work. Lake's marriage (1944-1952) to director Andre De Toth—for whom she appeared in two films, *RAMROD* (1947) and *SLATTERY'S HURRICANE* (1949)—is often blamed (especially by Lake in her frankly depressing and gauche autobiography, 1971's *Veronica*) for the ultimate failure of her career. While that may hold some truth, Lake compounded the problem by drinking. Moreover, she was an actress who so typified an era that she seemed out of place once that era had passed.

By 1970, the 51-year-old former star was a grotesque caricature of herself. The Veronica Lake of *FLESH FEAST* looks for all the world like a waitress from a lower class establishment playing dress-up and pretending to be Veronica Lake. Despite the fact that Lake had her own money in *FLESH FEAST*, she apparently knew the film was nothing shy of an amateurish disaster and no sort of a comeback. She had become Bela Lugosi to Grinter's Edward D. Wood Jr. Worse, she'd paid for the honor! For that matter, Wood's Lugosi films were nowhere near as embarrassing as *FLESH FEAST*. By the time she wrote her autobiography—a mere year later—Lake was trying to distance herself from the film, rightfully dismissing it as an abomination.

How bad is *FLESH FEAST*? Well, it not only makes Ed Wood look like a top-flight filmmaker, it makes Herschell Gordon Lewis look inspired! Cowritten by Grinter and cinematographer Thomas Casey, the film is probably best compared to *FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE SPACE MONSTER* (1965) and—more to the point—*THEY SAVED HITLER'S BRAIN* (1968). Like those unflinching messes, there seems to be at least two movies going on—and neither is very interesting, let alone any good. *FLESH FEAST* actually ups the other two crimes against cinema by being—believe it or not—even more amateurish. The early scenes involving the murder of a reporter are classic bottom-of-the-barrel filmmaking, utilizing that old film school dodge of trying to cover up the fact that the budget doesn't extend to live sound or proper dubbing by shooting characters from angles that don't allow for a good look at their mouths. (There's also a good chance that Grinter and company were shooting in public places without permission.) Not only does it look awkward and thereby call even more attention to the bad dubbing, it fools no one in its incredibly slipshod execution. K. Gordon Murray did a much more credible job of sticking English language tracks on his imported Mexican horror films.

Once the film gets to Dr. Elaine Frederick's (Lake's) Miami "mansion," the sound quality improves and appears to have been done with actual synchronized recording. Unfortunately, what they're recording isn't worth hearing. Dr. Frederick—a woman who, for a reel or two, seems to have a phobia about removing her hat—tells her main man, Carl (Doug Foster), "There's something I must tell you first. I never told you in my letters the nature of my experiments. Carl, you are not a scientist, you wouldn't understand." The real problem seems to be that no one involved seems to understand what the hell is going on—least of all Lake. Apart from her hat fixation (it's hard at first not to wonder if the unfortunate woman might be bald), Lake looks fairly presentable in her early scenes—an illusion shattered by the film's climax. What she doesn't look is focused. And she looks positively bewildered by her experiments. With her hat still on and wearing a pair of Playtex dishwashing gloves, she wanders around her decidedly economical lab, poking at what appear to be the meager proceeds of a grocery store's entrails selection and occasionally looking at the sparse electronic equipment with an air of never having seen it before. When Carl asks her, "Are you afraid to show me what's behind that door?" one almost expects her to ask, "What door?"

Part of the problem is undoubtedly the film's insistence on leading up to its surprise ending—which isn't much of a surprise, but is undeniably screwy in the extreme. Dr. Frederick's experiments—an apparent development of some Third Reich hijinks—involve plastic surgery by maggots. Why? Well, the film is vague on this point, but it seems that the little grubs also have some kind of rejuvenating properties. The idea, according to the bad guys, is to use this procedure on their decrepit fearless leader, who turns out to be none other than Adolf Hitler himself—played by an unbilled (probably by choice) actor who makes Tom Dugan's deliberately bogus Hitler in Lubitsch's *TO BE OR NOT TO BE* (1942) look positively authentic. What neither the Fuehrer nor his loyal minions know is that the doctor's Jewish mom perished in a concentration camp as a guinea pig for an early version of the process. As a result, Dr. Frederick is out to even the score with old Adolf and gets her chance to let her little maggot buddies eat him alive. Far more horrifying than Hitler's comeuppance is how bad Lake looks in these scenes, with the camera and harsh lighting right in her face, showing every inch of the ravages of time, alcohol, and the apparent

lack of a dental plan. While the whole idea of the horror hag film may be viewed as exploitative and distasteful, *FLESH FEAST* crosses over into an entirely separate realm of something cruel, obscene, and just plain unnecessary. Three years later, Lake died of hepatitis with this pathetic effort her swan song.

Next to *FLESH FEAST*, 1971's *BLOOD AND LACE* looks like a masterpiece—and making *BLOOD AND LACE* look good is no mean feat. This sole directing effort from one Philip S. Gilbert is disarmingly amateurish, cheerfully tasteless garbage that leaves the viewer wondering just how its sub-Herschell Gordon Lewis gore ever secured a PG (then GP) rating. Its main claim to fame—or perhaps notoriety—lies in affording Gloria Grahame a shot at hagdom. In the fifties, Grahame had worked for such directors as Josef von Sternberg and Fritz Lang and had played Ado Annie in the film version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *OKLAHOMA!* By 1971, Grahame hadn't made a movie in five years. Offered *BLOOD AND LACE*, it's a shame she wasn't a girl who could say no.

Grahame plays Mrs. Deere, whose motto might be "Nothing runs an orphanage like a Deere." Well, nothing, that is, since the days of Charles Dickens. Yes, difficult though it may be to believe, the plotline of *BLOOD AND LACE* bears more than a little resemblance to no less a source than *Oliver Twist* (1838)! Just think of Oliver as a teenage girl with a shady past, throw in some meat cleavers, and you pretty much have the story—with embellishments, of course, nearly all of which are borrowed from other sources. Gil Laskey—a screenwriter with some credits from TV's *THE VIRGINIAN* (1962-1971) and one feature, *THE GAY DECEIVERS* (1969)—opens his story with what is apparently supposed to be a grisly hammer murder. As shot by Philip S. Gilbert, it makes its obvious model—the opening of *STRAIT-JACKET*—look like brilliant filmmaking. The cutting from the raised hammer to the "gory" faces of the victims is the sort of clumsiness a first year film student—even one of Brad F. Grinter's students—would realize wasn't working.

Perhaps Gilbert thought it didn't matter, since it's only depicting one of Ellie Masters' (F. TROOP's Wrangler Jane, Melody Patterson) recurring nightmares, in which she relives witnessing the murder of her hooker mother. What Ellie can't remember during those nightmares is just who did the killing. The audience, being brighter than the character, probably has some clue about this shocking surprise, since the reason Ellie can't I.D. the killer is that the dream is from the point of view of—yes, the murderer! No, it doesn't get much better. The 22-year-old Patterson—in cheesecake teddy bear nightie—announces her intention of leaving the hospital where she's a patient, only to be reminded that she's the world's oldest minor, thereby getting herself slapped into Mrs. Deere's orphanage. It's a strict and strictly-for-profit institution, where runaways are routinely killed by sleazy handyman Tom (Len Lesser) and popped into the walk-in freezer for later disposal. The logic behind this is shaky, since the whole point of keeping these kids is to collect the county's stipend for their keep. Just how Mrs. Deere and Tom keep the head count up if they kill their charges is never very clear, though they do have a propensity for putting the corpses in the orphanage infirmary and fobbing them off as being sick. It's an interesting gambit, but one that would seem to have a limited shelf life.

The real point, of course, is to assure maximum mayhem. That isn't an unreasonable goal in an exploitation horror flick, but it helps if the mayhem is at least marginally convincing. Here, it's about as laughable as it can get. A shoddy day-for-night chase through the woods—during which Tom improbably shears his



ity slipping away just a little more with each piece of bad news. "Of course, Mr. Marrable bequeathed his personal possessions to you, including his watch, his gold cufflinks, his briefcase with all its contents," Bentley helpfully volunteers, causing the last vestige of Mrs. Marrable's gentility to vanish. "He lost his cufflinks! The watch disappeared between trips to the hospital! I have his rusty dagger, his stamp album that he hasn't looked at in years, and his boyhood butterfly collection. All this is mine, is it? To keep? Plus, the shirt of my back, I suppose!" Mrs. Marrable rails as—in a fit of pique—the end of the world comes for the butterfly collection, which leads to the question, "How am I going to live?"

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By 1970, the 51-year-old former star was a grotesque caricature of herself. The Veronica Lake of *FLESH FEAST* looks for all the world like a waitress from a lower class establishment playing dress-up and pretending to be Veronica Lake. Despite the fact that Lake had her own money in *FLESH FEAST*, she apparently knew the film was nothing shy of an amateurish disaster and no sort of a comeback. She had become Bela Lugosi to Grinter's Edward D. Wood Jr. Worse, she'd paid for the honor! For that matter, Wood's Lugosi films were nowhere near as embarrassing as *FLESH FEAST*. By the time she wrote her autobiography—a mere year later—Lake was trying to distance herself from the film, rightfully dismissing it as an abomination.



How bad is FLESH FEAST? Well, it not only makes Ed Wood look like a top-flight filmmaker, it makes Herschell Gordon Lewis look inspired! Cowritten by Grinter and cinematographer Thomas Casey, the film is probably best compared to FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE SPACE MONSTER (1965) and—more to the point—THEY SAVED HITLER'S BRAIN (1968). Like those unflinching messes, there seems to be at least two movies going on—and neither is very interesting, let alone any good. FLESH FEAST actually ups the other two crimes against cinema by being—believe it or not—even more amateurish. The early scenes involving the murder of a reporter are classic bottom-of-the-barrel filmmaking, utilizing that old film school dodge of trying to cover up the fact that the budget doesn't extend to live sound or proper dubbing by shooting characters from angles that don't allow for a good look at their mouths. (There's also a good chance that Grinter and company were shooting in public places without permission.) Not only does it look awkward and thereby call even more attention to the bad dubbing, it fools no one in its incredibly slipshod execution. K. Gordon Murray did a much more credible job of sticking English language tracks on his imported Mexican horror films.

Once the film gets to Dr. Elaine Frederick's (Lake's) Miami "mansion," the sound quality improves and appears to have been done with actual synchronized recording. Unfortunately, what they're recording isn't worth hearing. Dr. Frederick—a woman who, for a reel or two, seems to have a phobia about removing her hat—tells her main man, Carl (Doug Foster), "There's something I must tell you first. I never told you in my letters the nature of my experiments. Carl, you are not a scientist, you wouldn't understand." The real problem seems to be that no one involved seems to understand what the hell is going on—least of all Lake. Apart from her hat fixation (it's hard at first not to wonder if the unfortunate woman might be bald), Lake looks fairly presentable in her early scenes—an illusion shattered by the film's climax. What she doesn't look is focused. And she looks positively bewildered by her experiments. With her hat still on and wearing a pair of Playtex dishwashing gloves, she wanders around her decidedly economical lab, poking at what appear to be the meager proceeds of a grocery store's entrails selection and occasionally looking at the sparse electronic equipment with an air of never having seen it before. When Carl asks her, "Are you afraid to show me what's behind that door?" one almost expects her to ask, "What door?"

Part of the problem is undoubtedly the film's insistence on leading up to its surprise ending—which isn't much of a surprise, but is undeniably screwy in the extreme. Dr. Frederick's experiments—an apparent development of some Third Reich hijinks—involve plastic surgery by maggots. Why? Well, the film is vague on this point, but it seems that the little grubs also have some kind of rejuvenating properties. The idea, according to the bad guys, is to use this procedure on their decrepit fearless leader, who turns out to be none other than Adolf Hitler himself—played by an unbilled (probably by choice) actor who makes Tom Dugan's deliberately bogus Hitler in Lubitsch's TO BE OR NOT TO BE (1942) look positively authentic. What neither the Fuehrer nor his loyal minions know is that the doctor's Jewish mom perished in a concentration camp as a guinea pig for an early version of the process. As a result, Dr. Frederick is out to even the score with old Adolf and gets her chance to let her little maggot buddies eat him alive. Far more horrifying than Hitler's comeuppance is how bad Lake looks in these scenes, with the camera and harsh lighting right in her face, showing every inch of the ravages of time, alcohol, and the apparent

lack of a dental plan. While the whole idea of the horror hag film may be viewed as exploitative and distasteful, FLESH FEAST crosses over into an entirely separate realm of something cruel, obscene, and just plain unnecessary. Three years later, Lake died of hepatitis with this pathetic effort her swan song.

Next to FLESH FEAST, 1971's BLOOD AND LACE looks like a masterpiece—and making BLOOD AND LACE look good is no mean feat. This sole directing effort from one Philip S. Gilbert is dismally amateurish, cheerfully tasteless garbage that leaves the viewer wondering just how its sub-Herschell Gordon Lewis gore ever secured a PG (then GP) rating. Its main claim to fame—or perhaps notoriety—lies in affording Gloria Grahame a shot at hagdom. In the fifties, Grahame had worked for such directors as Josef von Sternberg and Fritz Lang and had played Ado Annie in the film version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's OKLAHOMA! By 1971, Grahame hadn't made a movie in five years. Offered BLOOD AND LACE, it's a shame she wasn't a girl who could say no.

Grahame plays Mrs. Deere, whose motto might be "Nothing runs an orphanage like a Deere." Well, nothing, that is, since the days of Charles Dickens. Yes, difficult though it may be to believe, the plotline of BLOOD AND LACE bears more than a little resemblance to no less a source than *Oliver Twist* (1838)! Just think of Oliver as a teenage girl with a shady past, throw in some meat cleavers, and you pretty much have the story—with embellishments, of course, nearly all of which are borrowed from other sources. Gil Laskey—a screenwriter with some credits from TV's THE VIRGINIAN (1962-1971) and one feature, THE GAY DECEIVERS (1969)—opens his story with what is apparently supposed to be a grisly hammer murder. As shot by Philip S. Gilbert, it makes its obvious model—the opening of STRAIT-JACKET—look like brilliant filmmaking. The cutting from the raised hammer to the "gory" faces of the victims is the sort of clumsiness a first year film student—even one of Brad F. Grinter's students—would realize wasn't working.

Perhaps Gilbert thought it didn't matter, since it's only depicting one of Ellie Masters' (F TROOP's Wrangler Jane, Melody Patterson) recurring nightmares, in which she relives witnessing the murder of her hooker mother. What Ellie can't remember during those nightmares is just who did the killing. The audience, being brighter than the character, probably has some clue about this shocking surprise, since the reason Ellie can't I.D. the killer is that the dream is from the point of view of—yes, the murderer! No, it doesn't get much better. The 22-year-old Patterson—in cheesecake teddy bear nightie—announces her intention of leaving the hospital where she's a patient, only to be reminded that she's the world's oldest minor, thereby getting herself slapped into Mrs. Deere's orphanage. It's a strict and strictly-for-profit institution, where runaways are routinely killed by sleazy handyman Tom (Len Lesser) and popped into the walk-in freezer for later disposal. The logic behind this is shaky, since the whole point of keeping these kids is to collect the county's stipend for their keep. Just how Mrs. Deere and Tom keep the head count up if they kill their charges is never very clear, though they do have a propensity for putting the corpses in the orphanage infirmary and fobbing them off as being sick. It's an interesting gambit, but one that would seem to have a limited shelf life.

The real point, of course, is to assure maximum mayhem. That isn't an unreasonable goal in an exploitation horror flick, but it helps if the mayhem is at least marginally convincing. Here, it's about as laughable as it can get. A shoddy day-for-night chase through the woods—during which Tom improbably shears his



quarry's (Peter Armstrong's) hand off (and then carefully put it in a suitcase!) with a well-thrown meat cleaver while the boy "hides" behind a very skinny tree—is bad enough, but it's the tip of the movie's iceberg of inadvertent humor. A subsequent scene with Tom carrying what is very obviously the hapless runaway's body through the school foyer, only to run into another inmate (Dennis Christopher) on the prowl for food ("Please, sir, may I have some more" redefined), is even funnier. (The kid doesn't seem to notice the bagged corpse with the dangling arm over Tom's shoulder!) All this is accompanied by overly emphatic music library tracks that make Ed Wood look like a master at matching music and image.

To make things worse—or better, if the film is taken as comedy—Mrs. Deere proves she's as looney as any other horror hag by talking to the corpses. "Oh, you are a foolish child!" she tells one. "Trying to run away. Why, Tom might have killed you with that knife! Lucky I got you to the freezer in time—you might have bled to death." Of course, she also talks to her home-style "cryogenically" frozen husband, too—only she gets advice from him! Sadly, what might have been enjoyable kitsch is run aground by the star's flat delivery. Grahame lacks the one essential common to all other practitioners of this art form—she doesn't seem to be enjoying herself very much. Embarrassing as it was, even Veronica Lake appeared to be having a good time in her big mad scene at the end of *FLESH FEAST*.

*BLOOD AND LACE* is unbelievably seedy, but its seediness serves no real purpose. It's merely distasteful. There's so little story that the film has to be fleshed out with no less than two subplots—a pointless romance between Ellie and the orphanage's other 20-plus inmate, Walter (Ronald Taft), and the investigation of Ellie's mother's murder by sleazy detective Calvin Carruthers (Vic Tayback), who seems far more interested in getting Ellie into the sack than solving the murder. On top of this, the movie tosses in a masked killer—who looks remarkably like Vic Tayback in a mask—midway through the proceedings. None of this adds much to the proceedings, other than sufficient footage to add up to a feature film.

After *FLESH FEAST* and *BLOOD AND LACE*, there really wasn't anywhere the horror hag film could go but up. What no one could have guessed is just how far up it would go, nor how soon it would happen. A scant two and a half months after *BLOOD AND LACE*, *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?* made its bow.

Enter Curtis Harrington—director, film fan, friend to horror icon James Whale, and the man responsible for saving *THE OLD DARK HOUSE* (1932) from extinction. In real life, Harrington is an effortless raconteur, and this talent—not to mention the style he brings to his stories—spills over into his films. The screenplay by Henry Farrell (of *BABY JANE* and *SWEET CHARLOTTE* fame), who had adapted his own novel, *HOW AWFUL ABOUT ALLAN*, for Harrington's 1970 telefilm starring Anthony Perkins and Julie Harris, had started life as an outline called *THE BOX STEP*. Harrington—partnered with producer George Edwards—worked closely with Farrell to turn that outline into *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?* "We're the ones who influenced Farrell to recreate the whole thing and put it in the 1930s, and center it around a dance school for children. There were

many elements that were changed by making it a period story—for example, the idea of women coming to Los Angeles and changing their identities, and having Debbie Reynolds made up to look like Jean Harlow in the thirties. A lot of the ambience was based on memories of my own childhood; I was born and raised in Los Angeles," Harrington told *Scarlet Street's* Kevin G. Shinnick in Issue #11.

Harrington's remarks are the key to *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?*. He may not have written the script, but the atmosphere of the movie is almost identical to hearing him tell some spectacularly grim Hollywood legend—or better yet, the truth behind such a legend. His evocation of the era in which the film takes place is marvelous—all the trappings are in place to give it a sense of the world and of Hollywood at that time. The deliberate (but nonspecific) references to thrill

killers Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb and Agnes Moorehead's Aimee Semple McPhersonlike evangelist lend the film a sense of authenticity. This authenticity even extends to the film's sound. Explaining this to *Scarlet Street* about the song, "Goody, Goody," and composer David Raksin's handling of it, Harrington noted, "I wanted to have absolutely authentic 1930s orchestration. It was very important to me. We played records from that period at a collector's house, and I said, 'Now, I want you to put together exactly that same combination of instruments'—because most contemporary films, when they play music from the thirties, reorchestrate it so it doesn't sound remotely like the period."

Equally important is the casting. As developed, *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?* was to have been made by Universal, but the studio was never satisfied in the matter of a star. After both Shirley MacLaine and Joanne Woodward turned it down, Universal lost interest and the movie wound up being made by Martin Ransohoff and Filmways for release through United Artists. Through this arrangement, Debbie Reynolds became the star—and a happier

arrangement could not be imagined. Not only did the film offer her the chance to break free of her ingrained image—affording her far more dramatic range than most of the projects offered her—but Reynolds herself brought something to the proceedings that would have been missing with MacLaine or Woodward: genuine Hollywood glamour. At 49, Reynolds was perfect for the role. By no stretch of the imagination could she be called a horror hag—the movie had Shelley Winters for that. Rather, she was just mature enough to be perfectly believable as a Hollywood immigrant making one last, desperate bid for the good life—that is, on the terms depicted in the movies of the time.

Setting the period tone, Harrington's film starts with a genuine Hearst Metrotone newsreel into which he seamlessly incorporates new footage of Adelle Bruckner (Reynolds) and Helen Hill (Winters) coming out of a courthouse following the life sentence just handed down to their sons for a "brutal, mutilation" murder. Fending off the reporters, they get into a waiting car. The film freeze-frames as art deco styled credits play over the image, which slowly turns to color in a series of jigsaw pieces. It quickly transpires that someone in the crowd has cut Helen. "You're crying. You never cry," notes Adelle, neatly putting forth the first clue about Helen's repressed—or more correctly, sublimated—self.





Adelle already has a plan in place—she's going to take her dancing school to Hollywood and specialize in teaching all the wanna-be Shirley Temples how to sing and dance. The idea has less appeal to Helen, who wonders if Adelle isn't going to regret being so far away from her imprisoned son. Adelle rationalizes that the boy turned on her. ("I did everything I could for him. It wasn't my fault if his father took a powder.") The script is incredibly shrewd in making nearly everything Adelle says come across in moviespeak of the era. She rarely seems like a real person—more like someone playing a role she's put together out of movies she's seen. Even on the rare occasions that something less fabricated shows through—when Lincoln Palmer (Dennis Weaver) later gives her a corsage, the only way she can indicate her delight is by saying, "Gardenias! Joan Crawford's favorite!"—it's related to the movies, in a wholly superficial *Photoplay* manner.

It's not apparent on a single viewing, but more is going on in this setup scene than merely moving the characters out West. Not only does it offer a glimpse of Adelle's movieland mania, but it subtly touches on the the sublimation that drives the events concerning just what is the matter with Helen. Helen's response to the "took a powder" line—"You know, Adelle, men can be quite a bit lower than the angels"—in itself suggests a basic dislike, or at least distrust, of men. The real clue, however, lies in Helen's body language. She reaches out to caress Adelle's cheek—not daring to actually make physical contact, yet obviously longing to do so. And Adelle is not so innocent as she might like to appear. Her reaction strongly indicates that she at least suspects she's been on the receiving end of a clumsy pass. Even more interesting is the fact that—on some level—Adelle does not dislike the attention, since she soon is inviting Helen to go with her to Hollywood. On top of this is the basic irony that a woman who has proven less than successful as a mother has decided to start up a school specifically for children!

The plan for the Hollywood trip is itself instructive, since it's all grounded in the idea of reinventing themselves—new hairstyles, new names, and even new backgrounds. Then as now, Hollywood is the perfect place to be whoever and whatever you like. Hadn't Harrington's friend, James Whale completely recreated himself there—burying his working class background in an aura of upper class poshness with a completely fabricated background? That's almost identical to Adelle's notions here—and Helen will obviously go along with just about anything in order to be with Adelle.

Once the film hits Hollywood, Harrington's precision at depicting the place and the era is nothing short of remarkable. Adelle has transformed herself into a Harlowesque platinum blonde and opened her dance studio, which—much like herself—seems slightly false. It isn't exactly shabby, but it comes across as putting up a bolder front to the world than it should. It's obviously within sight of—just around the corner from—a prosperous-looking street, but isn't quite there itself. The setting includes many nice, unforced touches. The sheet music from the 1927 Broadway show *GOOD NEWS* sits on the piano. Across the street at a neighborhood movie house, a marquee for Karloff and Lugosi in 1934's *THE BLACK CAT* ("Can You Take It?") can be glimpsed (an interesting embellishment for a director who once told this writer that what first drew him to the horror genre was a 30-sheet billboard for 1935's *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*).

Equally on the money is the presentation of the stage mothers who hover around the fringes of the dance class. These aren't merely the dress extras they so easily could have been, as is obvious when Harrington's camera prowls past them. Each has a distinct personal-

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ity (they include genre fave Yvette Vickers) and is given some little bit of business as we see them. It strikes just the right tone without becoming outright caricature.

The same can be said for Micheal MacLiammoir's delightfully outrageous Hamilton Starr. ("Hamilton Starr—two r's, but prophetic nonetheless.") The character—a rather lavender red herring—almost certainly has his inspiration in Victor Buono's Edwin Flagg character from *WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE?*, but MacLiammoir makes this 1930s variant completely his own. A key figure in the world of Irish theater, cofounder of Dublin's The Gate Theatre and friend of Orson Welles, MacLiammoir only made a handful of movies, with *HELEN* being his last. If only by virtue of his interplay with Reynolds, it probably offers him his best role. The character is every inch a ham and easily as self-invented as Adelle. (His impeccable clothing is worn too consistently for us to believe it's part of an extensive wardrobe.) He makes his entrance in the grand manner, giving the two women—and the audience—a false scare. When he explains that the door was open, Helen remarks, "You could have rung the bell." "I hate to spoil an entrance, I'm afraid," he confesses. His purpose in coming to the studio, it turns out, is purely mercenary:

*Starr:* I give private lessons in voice and diction to a few moppets with ambitious mothers. Among these is your Charlene Parker, a small but horrendous creature of absolutely no talent whatsoever. Now, since the arrival of the talking picture...

*Helen:* Just what are you trying to say?

*Starr:* It's perfectly simple, my dear lady; just concentrate for the moment, will you? Since the talking picture is here to stay, your moppets must learn to speak distinctly as well as shake their fat little legs. Now, why not extend your curriculum to include courses in drama, elocution... given by myself?

His very outrageousness and apparent fraudulence immediately wins over Adelle, whose expression makes it clear that he amuses her without even slightly fooling her. Whether or not she genuinely accepts the dubious authenticity of his numerous letters of recommendation from everyone from John Barrymore to Mrs. Pat Campbell to George Bernard Shaw is hard to say, but her recognition of a kindred spirit who puts up an impressive front is clearly the motivating factor for accepting his proposal.

Things go along fairly well for the enterprise, especially since Adelle never overlooks any chance to better herself—as she brazenly does to attract the attention of her only "stage father," Lincoln Palmer. Ostensibly, she's showing the students how to put some jazz into their "Goody, Goody" tap dance routine. In reality, she's making a head-on play for the rich Texas oilman. Unfortunately, this fact is not lost on Helen—and she doesn't like it one bit. Despite putting a brave face on the resulting dinner date, Helen's pathetic, "Adelle... you won't be home late, will you?" says it all.

In many respects, Adelle getting a life of her own is the point in the narrative where Helen's world starts crumbling. The real slap in the face occurs when Helen's efforts at decorating the studio for a dance recital are for nothing—Palmer has booked a real theater for the event. "But it's our recital!" objects Helen, before realizing she's gone too far. (The level of importance attached to this is clear by the film's end.) The damage to her own mental state is done, though, and Adelle's further revelation that Palmer is the first man she's been

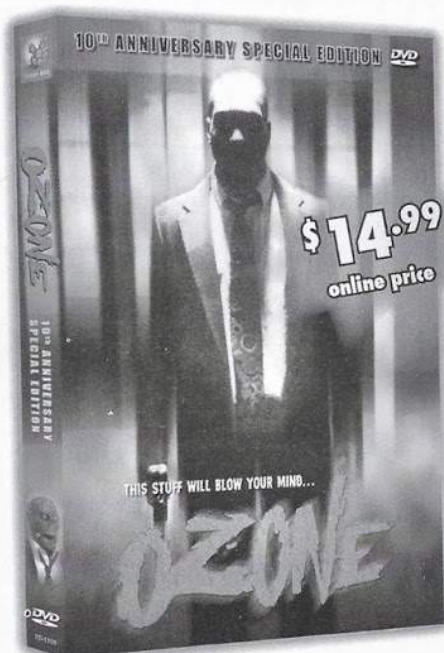
"serious about in years" does nothing to help. Helen's fantasy world—just as unreal as Adelle's Hollywood dream, though grounded in a relationship that doesn't exist and pop culture religion (the last movie she saw was 1932's *THE SIGN OF THE CROSS*, as bizarre a mix of sex and piety as could be imagined)—can't stand the intrusion of an outside party.

With that disintegration, Helen becomes more and more a liability. She really starts to lose it at the recital—something that has grown into *ADELLE'S KIDDYSTAR REVUE* and evolved into a behemoth exercise in sub-Busby Berkeley bad taste, complete with a wholly arbitrary star turn for Adelle. As might be expected, the show is cobbled together—none too well—from bits and pieces of movies Adelle has seen. The worst of her ideas is presenting one of her moppets (Robbi Morgan) as a diminutive Mae West, a concept Harrington probably derived from the early Shirley Temple shorts for Educational Pictures, two reels that play uncomfortably like a pedophile's fantasy. (One of these, 1932's *POLLY TIX IN WASHINGTON*, actually casts Temple as a five-year-old of easy virtue!) It's also not improbable that Harrington was aware of the critical complaints of tastelessness surrounding Baby Rose Marie's "torch song" in *INTERNATIONAL HOUSE* (1933). Whatever the case, the number is not only a clever comment on the whole child star business, but it's perfectly integrated into the picture's examination of Helen's trouble. The song, "Oh, You Nasty Man" (not a Mae West number, in fact, but warbled by a platinum-blond Alice Faye in 1934's *GEORGE WHITE'S SCANDALS*) precisely sums up Helen's take on the male of the species. It's hardly coincidental that her first breakdown—with visions of her son's victim and the (possibly) accidental death of Helen's husband (Gary Combs)—occurs during it. It's equally to the point that her subsequent screaming fit should happen right in the middle of Adelle's big number.

It's not long before Adelle wants to be rid of Helen, especially when she comes to suspect that Helen, in an attempt to put the millionaire off her, is responsible for sending Palmer a newspaper clipping revealing Adelle's past. In Adelle's mind—and she's not entirely wrong—every time things start to go well for her, Helen somehow manages to ruin them. But getting Helen out of her life isn't as easy as it sounds, since no sooner does she leave her alone to pack than Helen accidentally kills a man (Harry Stanton) who was apparently only bringing news of an inheritance. Realizing, however, that handing Helen over to the authorities will only bring everything out into the open, Adelle conspires to dump the body in an excavation across the street.

The murder, though, preys on Helen's mind and she descends further into her dangerously unstable state. She seeks expiation from radio evangelist Sister Alma (Agnes Moorehead), but the good sister works on a purely wholesale level and has no time for personal confessions, brushing her off with, "I told you—God forgives you. Take my word for it." Adelle arrives and—realizing what Helen is trying to do—calms her hysterical charge with a well-delivered slap. "You only did what had to be done, sister. God has forgiven you," Sister Alma assures Adelle, unconscious of the many ironic levels on which that assessment could be taken. After this, Helen becomes even more unhinged, believing herself beyond forgiveness, finally becoming openly homicidal, confessing the murder of her husband to Adelle ("After a while I couldn't stand him. I couldn't stand him to touch me"), and finally turning on Adelle herself, leading to one further ironic development and one of the most chilling endings of any horror film. Unfortunately, the powerful image of that ending—Adelle gruesomely trussed up like a lifeless marionette—was too tempting





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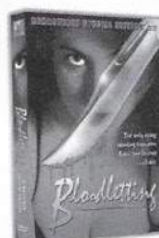
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for the film's distributors, who splashed the photo of the scene all over the advertising, robbing the film of much of its climactic shock.

Interestingly, while they damaged the film's impact by giving away too much in the advertising, United Artists seems to have been surprisingly aware of the film's lesbian subtext, heading one ad with the all too apt words from "Goody, Goody"—"So you met someone and now you know how it feels. Goody, goody." A neater summation of the source of all the tragedy and madness running through WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN? could not be imagined. (So perfectly in tune is the song with HELEN's horrors that it was one of the first choices for *Scarlet Street's* CD album JEEPERS CREEPERS: GREAT SONGS FROM HORROR FILMS, where it was performed by Lynnette Perry and horror host Zacherley.)

Harrington followed HELEN with WHOEVER SLEW AUNTIE ROO? (1972), an interesting variant of the Hansel and Gretel story that again starred Shelley Winters as the central madwoman. A super glossy British production, it is quite possibly the richest, most color-saturated film in Harrington's filmography. Thematically, however, AUNTIE ROO seems rather tame up against HELEN?. Still, the film has much to recommend it—not the least of which is its delightful ambiguity concerning the innocence of its children protagonists.

As horror hags go, Winters' Rosie Forrest (or "Aunt Roo" as she insists the children call her) isn't really such a bad old crow. Just because she keeps the mummified body of her accidentally killed daughter in a secret room and tries to kidnap a replacement doesn't make her a bad person. Indeed, somewhat like Bette Davis in THE ANNIVERSARY, Aunt Roo isn't at all a traditional hag, but rather a stylish, middle-aged woman. Her greatest social sin lies in the fact that she's a somewhat brash American former showgirl and the widow of an English stage magician. She seems a bit out of place in 1920s England, living in an old mansion. The script by Roger Bleas and Hammer's Jimmy Sangster has the wit to make her a generous, sympathetic character, never question-

ing the genuinely nice motivation behind her annual Christmas party for the children of the local orphanage.

Part of the point behind the production was in fact putting the child star of OLIVER! (1968), Mark Lester, in a horror picture. The cleverness behind this, however, very much lay in his character. The orphaned Christopher is undeniably an appealing child, but he's far from an angelic innocent. He's willful, stubborn, given to fantasizing, and has a streak of childish cruelty. Oliver Twist he's not—and his curtain line in the film's final scene is priceless.

Being a British production, AUNTIE ROO is also blessed with a magnificent assortment of supporting character actors—Ralph Richardson, Lionel Jeffries, Hugh Griffith, Rosalie Crutchley, and Michael Gothard all have good roles and add immeasurably to the fun. Richardson is particularly enjoyable as a probably bogus and undoubtedly venal spirit medium, whose silence in the small matter of kidnapping can be bought for two bottles of Napoleon brandy. ("I fear this young man is extremely confused.")

And then there's Shelley Winters herself. Aunt Roo may not have the depth of the character of Helen, but it's a splendid showcase. In addition to giving her several fine moments of the macabre, AUNTIE ROO hands her a perfectly charming scene in which she sings "Tit-willow" from THE MIKADO at the Christmas party to the delight of the children and the audience. Done without camp or condescension, it's a lovely moment—one that's handled with consummate skill by Harrington, whose editing of the scene is remarkably, indefinably right. For just a moment or two in this horror film, it's hard not to wish you, too, were spending Christmas with Aunt Roo.

Lightweight it may be, but WHOEVER SLEW AUNTIE ROO? is very much a fun, stylish film that never fails to entertain. On a purely technical level, Harrington is at the top of his game—witty, clever, endlessly creative.

Harrington followed AUNTIE ROO with the brilliantly disturbing THE KILLING KIND—previously discussed as a tangential offering in the horror hag collec-





tion—a film that was bracketed by two genre-related TV movies, *THE CAT CREATURE* (1973) and *KILLER BEES* (1974). The former was a B-movie homage of interest primarily because of the presence of such old-timers as Gale Sondergaard, Keye Luke, Kent Smith (pictured with Meredith Baxter), John Carradine, John Abbott, and Milton Parsons. In “hag” terms, the honors go to Sondergaard, but it seems unlikely that anyone

would ever attach the term to her—and live! *KILLER BEES* returned the subgenre to *SUNSET BLVD* by starring Gloria Swanson. Harrington wouldn’t return to big screen hagdom until 1977 with *RUBY*, a moody horror film that came in the wake of Piper Laurie’s great performance as Margaret White in Brian De Palma’s *CARRIE* the previous year. In fact, the character of Ruby Claire in *RUBY* was obviously conceived with Laurie—and her trademark red hair—in mind.

Piper Laurie (nee Rosetta Jacobs) was never a major star. Her movie career as a contract player in the 1950s was made up of often enjoyable, but largely undistinguished programmers for Universal-International. She shunted back and forth as romantic lead for other Universal contract players, appearing more than once with Donald O’Connor, Tony Curtis, Rock Hudson, and Rory Calhoun. When her Universal contract came to an end, she only made two more movies—*UNTIL THEY SAIL* (1957) and *THE HUSTLER* (1961), both opposite Paul Newman. Ironically, *THE HUSTLER* provided her with the kind of acting opportunity the Universal programmers had denied her, snagged her a Best Actress Oscar nomination, and was followed by absolutely no worthwhile offers. It would be 15 years before De Palma lured her back to the movies with *CARRIE*—a film that garnered her another Oscar nomination (Supporting Actress) and has turned her into what might be called the Icon That Nobody Knows. Her classic line in the film, “They’re all gonna laugh at you,” was later annexed as an impression by Adam Sandler, resulting in legions of kids doing a Piper Laurie impression even though they think they’re doing an Adam Sandler impression!

*CARRIE* was a surprise hit and the breakthrough film for De Palma as a director (and arguably the start of a downward artistic turn for the filmmaker). It was only natural—in Hollywood terms—that Laurie would be offered another horror picture in honor of her comeback. And it was just as natural that it would be a lesser project done along the lines of an exploitation picture. In this case, it was a strange blend of the horror hag film, a standard haunted drive-in flick, and *THE EXORCIST* (1973)—a concept with exploitation written all over it.

But *RUBY* was—and is—a pretty classy exploitation picture, thanks in no small part to Harrington’s handling of the somewhat silly material provided him by friend and producer George Edwards, who penned the script with Barry Schneider from a story by executive producer Steve Krantz (then best known as the producer of Ralph Bakshi’s animated films). Harrington has a firm grasp on the material and seems to revel in its sleazy settings of the vintage drive-in movie theater and the creepy old gangland roadhouse Ruby inhabits with her mute daughter (Janit Baldwin) and paralyzed—almost comatose—old gangster boss, Jake (Fred Kohler Jr.). The theater is an especially nice touch—even if the movie does cheat by showing the 1958 *ATTACK OF THE 50 FOOT WOMAN* in 1951—since, after all, what more likely venue did the finished product have than the drive-in? In its heart of hearts, *RUBY* is a drive-in movie set at a drive-in, some-

thing that adds a level of creepiness to the proceedings if the film happens to have been seen in that setting.

There’s also a certain aptness to Harrington working on a project that was born of Laurie’s success in *CARRIE*, since Laurie’s Margaret White isn’t a whole lot more than a more flamboyant, heterosexual version of Helen in *WHAT’S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?* (Contrast Margaret’s rhapsodic “He puts his hands all over me—and I liked it” with Helen’s “I couldn’t stand him to touch me.”) Ruby was similarly a good chance for Laurie to branch out from *CARRIE*. The 45-year-old actress was far from removed from hagdom, but had allowed herself to be seriously unglamorized in *CARRIE*. The glamour in *RUBY* is of the obvious—and slightly tacky and rundown—kind, but Laurie still proves that she’s hardly ready to be put out to pasture.

The storyline is delightful (if not always wholly comprehensible) schlock. A nicely achieved period opening has Ruby’s gangster boyfriend, Nicky (Sal Vecchio), bumped off by his gang, which causes the not-very-pregnant-looking Ruby to go into labor. Following that, the movie jumps ahead 16 years to find Ruby running a drive-in theater within sight—or at least telescope range—of Jake’s roadhouse. For reasons that never seem very clear, Ruby has given all the old gang jobs at her drive-in. (The motivations for the relationships of the characters is one of the vaguer points about the movie.) Suddenly, strange events permit themselves the luxury of occurring—starting with the drive-in’s projectionist, Jess (Edward Donno), being hanged (with movie film, no less) by unseen forces. Despite the fact that the scene—like many in the film—is marred by some very 1977 hairstyles in 1951 (not to mention a certain humor value in watching a man being terrorized by a film reel rolling across the floor), it’s a great setup for Ruby’s tough-as-nails character. She unflinchingly demands that her right-hand man, Vince (Stuart Whitman), dispose of the body, only to have one afterthought—“Start the movie first.”

Far more disconcerting than this overt horror is the creepy scene in which Ruby relives her past for the benefit of herself and the vegetating Jake in the ballroom of the roadhouse, fantasizing that it’s still 1935 and the crowd is calling for her to appear. It’s a small scene, but Harrington’s handling of it and Laurie’s playing imbues it with a genuinely unwholesome feeling—equal in its own way to Baby Jane Hudson performing for Edwin Flagg 15 years earlier in *WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE?* It also economically lets us in on the fact that the hard-drinking, no-nonsense businesswoman is also a sandwich or two shy of a picnic. But how unhinged she is remains open to question on at least one level—since the evidence is amassing that her drunken assertion that Nicky has come back may not be entirely screwy.

As the body count rises, Vince calls in a paranormal psychologist, Dr. Paul Keller (*DARK SHADOWS*’ Roger Davis), to investigate. There’s a nice moment when Keller tries to schmooze Ruby (who is obviously already attracted to the young man) by telling her he has one of her records. “Ha! I only made one!” she laughs. Keller’s psychic abilities are never in question—he’s always doing something showy to prove them, like some table-tapping Sherlock Holmes—but it can hardly be claimed that his presence is especially helpful at setting things to rights. In fact, the mysterious killings and generally spooky events only increase upon his arrival. At least one killing is decidedly ingenious and darkly humorous—gangster-cum-drive-in-snack-bar-worker Barney (Len Lesser) ends up dead in a soft drink machine, his body discovered by a child who tells his mother that “there’s a dead guy in the drink machine,” only to be upbraided with, “No more horror movies for you!” (It’s a nice touch for anyone who grew up on horror pictures to the concerned annoyance of his or her parents.) This bit is then topped by a movie



in-joke when someone comes along and gets a cup of Barney's blood instead of a drink—an apt topper considering that Coca Cola syrup was often used to simulate blood in black-and-white movies. (One wonders if Joan Crawford insisted on Pepsi?)

RUBY works best as a vehicle for Piper Laurie and as an exploitation piece about a haunted drive-in. By the time it wanders into its EXORCIST mode, with Leslie becoming possessed by Nicky's spirit, it starts to seem needlessly cluttered. Despite solid acting all around—not the least of which comes from Janit Baldwin as Leslie—and some creepily impressive possession gymnastics, the whole exorcism/possession business plays out in a flat by-the-numbers manner that seems entirely designed to cash in on the post-EXORCIST world and get the movie to an easy climax. It's not bad in and of itself. It's just too familiar. Far better is Ruby's big revelation to Nicky's ghost, proving that she wasn't a part of the setup that ended his life. She unveils the gruesome souvenir of her revenge on Jake—"I did it for you, Nicky. Look what I did! They're Jake's! I cut them out with my scissors!"

Nothing that follows tops this moment—certainly not Vince being attacked by marauding drive-in speakers and cheating Nicky's vengeance by jumping out of a car that's under siege at the last minute. The climax itself, with Ruby sacrificing herself to the apparently hard-to-convince Nicky, is perfunctory in the extreme, especially in its current form. Harrington has gone on record that the film as it finally emerged is not the one he turned in, especially as concerns the abrupt and ultimately illogical—but according to the dictates of the producers, more horrific—ending.

Enjoyable as it is on many levels, RUBY is far from Harrington's best work and far from being one of the great entries in the horror hags sweepstakes, even though it holds place of honor as being the last of its particular breed. Times were changing and actresses who were "past their prime" were no longer being as readily consigned to roles of this type. The already unappealing appellation of horror hag was taking on an increasingly offensive sound, but it should be remembered that when the concept came about in 1962, it offered an acting venue for actresses who were otherwise denied work because of their age. Old pros like Davis and company not only revelled in the opportunity to work, but actually embraced the form, since it allowed them to have a great deal of scenery-chewing fun.

The resulting movies are very much of their time and need to be viewed in that light. With such middle-aged and beyond stars as Diane Lane in UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN and Diane Keaton in SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE proving very successful in straight roles at the box office today, a resurgence of the form is unthinkable, and that's only appropriate. We have moved on, but the strange legacy of the horror hags will always be there—not merely to entertain us with its over-the-top dramatics, but to remind us of the unjust way things once were.

Instead of horror hags we now have horror drags—or at least one of them, thanks to drag queen Charles Busch, who just last year brought his play, DIE! MOMMY! DIE! to the screen. As much a parody of the old Ross Hunter soap operas as the horror hag film, it's probably as close a modern film is likely to get to the form—and it may not be close enough, because the filmmakers don't appear to realize that the movies they're mocking were often just this side of sending themselves up in the first place. Once you've heard Bette Davis herself say, "But you are, Blanche, you are in that chair" and "Shirley, dear, would you mind sitting somewhere else? Body odor offends me"—well, mere imitation is just a blurry Xerox copy.

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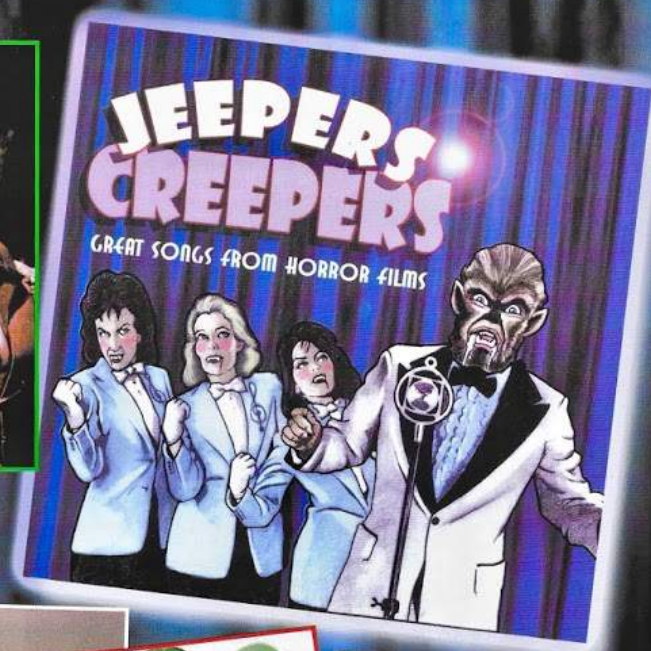
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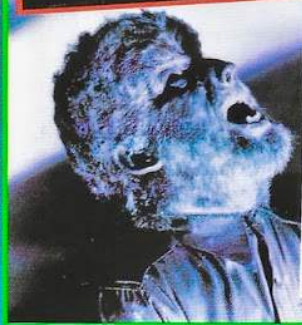
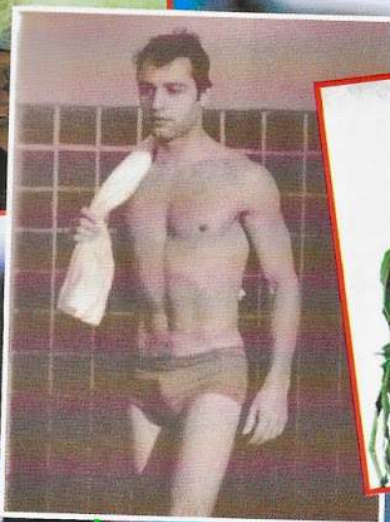
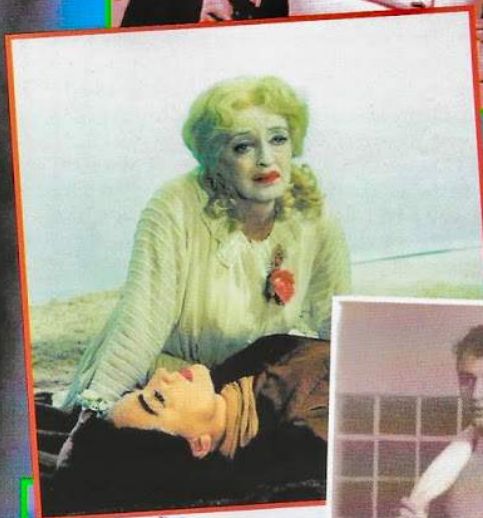
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## THE GREAT CHAN BAN

*Continued from page 27*

and Asian Americans." He further stated that he's not offended by the films, but by the portrayal of Charlie himself. "When I was a kid watching them, I knew there was something really wrong with that. There's something about them that disturbed me. If I happened to see them on, I would watch because of the novelty of seeing Asians on the screen—I thought Number One Son was kind of cool—but there was something about Charlie Chan himself that really bothered me." He blamed this on his later realization that it was because of the white actors playing him, and added that much of his distaste for the character stemmed from the fact that other schoolchildren would make fun of him by quoting Charlie Chan aphorisms.

Similarly, Narasaki lodged the argument that, "prior to World War II" and its anti-Asian hysteria (which was, it might be noted, specifically anti-Japanese), there had been Asian stars, such as Anna May Wong and Sessue Hayakawa. That's unarguable, but they were rarely leads and the worst of the "Yellow Peril" movies that depicted all Asians as evil foreigners were made before the Charlie Chan films. (Nearly all of the Chan films in the Fox series were made before WWII.) Oland, in fact, had gone from being the insidious Dr. Fu Manchu at Paramount to playing the heroic Chan at Fox the very same year (1931)—a year that also saw Anna May Wong play Fu's evil daughter.

Pressed on the issue, Narasaki agreed—as NAPALC seemingly will not—that, regardless of who played Charlie, the character was a huge step forward in the manner in which Asians were presented on the screen. Still, he would not budge in his determination that the movies should not be shown on television.

**Ken Hanke:** What worries me about this over-all more than anything else is that it's a form of censorship.

**Ken Narasaki:** Oh, that gets pulled out every time there's an issue.

**KH:** Of course, it does, but where do you stop? And how do you justify that in the same week that they cancel the Charlie Chan films, they run Peter Medak's *ZORRO, THE GAY BLADE*? I don't have a problem with this film, but I can understand gay people having a problem with it, I can understand Hispanic people having a problem with it...

**Alan Colmes:** So you've got to wonder if any group gets wind of Fox's schedule and decides they don't like something, they just protest and Fox will just yank it.

**KH:** Are they no longer going to show *PINKY* because it has Jeanne Crain playing a black woman?

**KN:** You know, if African Americans protest it and have a strong enough argument—I think you can always make these arguments that if you take it to the next step then it's absurd. The reality is that, if you just listen to the arguments against it and make your own decision as Fox did.

**KH:** Do you know any Asian people who like these films?

**KN:** You know, I think I got at least one letter that said, "What's the big deal?"

**AC:** Do you really believe that Fox showing this or anybody exhibiting the Charlie Chan films literally hurts Asian Americans?

**KN:** Well, I know that when I was growing up, it was the Charlie Chan movies, it was the

Charlie Chan speeches that kids would throw at me. That's how they would make fun of me. "Confucius say"—which is, of course, Charlie Chan's tag line.

**AC:** So we're better off if these movies never see the light of day again?

**KN:** You know, they're out there on video, they're out there on DVD...

**KH:** Actually, they're not.

**KN:** ... and the fans can watch them, and that's fine if people want to watch them.

**AC:** They're not that readily available?

**KH:** None of the Chan films from 20th Century Fox are available on DVD.

Did the debate lead anywhere? Probably not other than to get the issue more out in the open, though it's interesting to note that, of the callers, only one person sided with the idea of banning the films. My problem—beyond a basic distaste for censorship and what appears to be cultural vandalism in an attempt to rewrite history by suppressing it—lies in the fact that it's become abundantly obvious that the attempts to ban the Chan films are less than honest. They include such gross misinformation about the movies themselves that the entire argument against them is undermined.

Soon after the FOX NEWS LIVE debate, it was reported in the Rush and Molloy gossip column in the *New York Daily News* that the decision to drop the Chan films was due not to the complaints of Asian American rights groups, but was implemented at the insistence of Fox media mogul Rupert Murdoch's Chinese-born wife, Wendi Deng. Fox denied that Deng was involved, but, immediately after this report, all dialogue between film scholars and the Fox Movie Channel abruptly stopped. The cordial attitude of the cable channel became one in which writers were greeted with such comments as, "It wouldn't be appropriate for me to talk about that." After having been contacted by FMC and asked for further input and permission to keep in touch with me, I suddenly found my e-mails unanswered. None of this proved Mrs. Murdoch's involvement in the Chan ban, of course, but there seemed little room for doubt that higher sources had come into play and told FMC to bury the entire issue.

At this point in the saga, a very "strange event" permitted itself the luxury of occurring. Four of the films (1936's *CHARLIE CHAN AT THE OPERA*, 1938's *CHARLIE CHAN IN HONOLULU*, 1940's *MURDER OVER NEW YORK*, and 1942's *CASTLE IN THE DESERT*) mysteriously—and with no fanfare or announcement—found their way back onto FMC's September schedule. Questions about this turn of events went unanswered—but at least part of the rationale quickly became apparent when it was announced that the films would be accompanied by a panel discussion before and after them. A panel discussion of the pros and cons of the series? Why, no! The panel was comprised strictly of members of Asian activist groups—no film scholars, movie critics, or Charlie Chan fans need apply. What an interesting approach—and from a cable channel owned by the same people who boast that their news programs are "fair and balanced!" (Whenever you see that phrase bandied about, expect the opposite.)

Not only was this an utter sham in terms of being a "discussion," but it quickly transpired that the panel was dealing from a stacked deck. The activist Angry Asian Man's Website announced, "The panel actually selected the films to be shown, and incidentally wound up picking the ones they deemed more offensive, in order to point out the most obvious problematic elements." So not only was all opposition to the ban squelched, but the panel was given carte blanche to isolate those



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things they disliked to "prove" their point—effectively ignoring anything that might not support their viewpoint.

According to an article in *The Hollywood Reporter*, "But with Fox's license agreement to air the films set to expire at month's end, the network decided to bring back four titles, along with discussions featuring experts including actor Harry Shen and Peter Feng, professor of Asian-American studies and film at the University of Delaware." It's unclear what constitutes an expert in this case—something that was made even murkier by the discussions themselves—but it was notable that FMC has to bid for the rights to show these films from their parent company just like any other cable channel. The article also supported the website claim about the choice of films:

"We believe that the introductory piece and follow-up discussion will help promote understanding of the issues many Asian-Americans have with these films," said Karen Narasaki, president and executive director of the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium. (My Fox Radio sparring partner, Ken Narasaki, was among the panelists chosen. Is it wholly coincidental that this struggling actor bears the same last name as the president and executive director of NAPALC?)

The discussions themselves were hardly edifying and mostly off-topic in the extreme. MURDER OVER NEW YORK was raked over the coals principally because of a scene in which a call is put out to "round up every Hindu in town." Now, in strictly racial terms that's pretty suspect, but what the panel didn't mention was that the Hindus in question are not presented as being suspect. The one man the police are looking for is a Hindu—and the only suspect brought in to be made sport of is Shemp Howard, who is posing as a Hindu. (That this scene comes from a 1940 movie—and that the suspect is one of The Three Stooges—must be taken into account. Indignation might better be directed at the "racial profiling" going on in post-9/11 America, not over a minor incident in a 63-year-old B picture.)

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This same scene gave Ken Narasaki the chance to toss off this opinion: "I've had people tell me, 'Well, y'know, actually the Chinese in these Charlie Chan films are treated quite well. And it's really the other people who get it badly, so what are you complaining about?'" The statement is a twisted version of what was said during the FOX NEWS LIVE interview. No one asserted that other races get treated worse than the Chinese in the films, but rather that Charlie is always shown as being smarter, more patient, more cultured, and better mannered than the white characters. There's a significant difference.

Narasaki continued, saying, "I think African-Americans oftentimes were in these same films treated very terribly, and I do think that just because we are treated better in these films doesn't make it any reason to ignore the fact that these films contain a lot of racist images." That's fair enough—at least as concerns some of the films—but Narasaki's sudden problem with the films other "racist images" was not something that originally concerned him. It comes across as merely an afterthought, a convenient cudgel to use against the series.

The discussion then degenerated into a lot of grousing from Parry Shen and Roger Fan, two actors who appeared in the film BETTER LUCK TOMORROW (2002), a low-budget offering from MTV films that opened to generally positive reviews, but which didn't do big business. What this had to do with Charlie Chan was anyone's guess, except that it seemed connected with an idea haltingly expressed by Parry Shen. "But after the film, after all that, it sort of—there was still a ceiling. That just shows this sort of limited thinking, that comes from a bygone era. That we still are up against. Despite all the great work that people—not just actors—other people who have come before us, still find that there is a ceiling, because the people are so limited to the views that they have cemented in their heads."

Continued on page 76



# Book Ends

## The Scarlet Street Review of Books

### EVERYTHING WAS POSSIBLE

Ted Chapin

Alfred A. Knopf, 2003

331 pages—\$30.00

The legendary musical theater treat, FOLLIES (1971), which combined the glittering talents of Stephen Sondheim, James Goldman, Michael Bennett, and Harold Prince, has been revised, revisited, and revived with frequency since its Broadway debut. Even after over 30 years of changes, the appeal of the original FOLLIES has not dimmed. A once in a lifetime, nearly perfect blend of music, nostalgia, middle-aged angst, and ghostly presences, the musical—like the “horror hag” fright films of the sixties and early seventies—showcased veteran film stars and youthful stars-in-waiting, though to a far less blood-drenched conclusion. (Nevertheless, there’s no great stretch, really, between the FOLLIES character Sally Durant, trapped in the fantasy of her youthful life and romances, and Baby Jane Hudson of 1962’s WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE? Sally’s showstopper, “Losing My Mind,” would be no less appropriate for Baby Jane, though for Jane the lyric would

have to be changed to, “The sun comes up, I think about me . . .”) FOLLIES was a huge endeavor, a risky investment, but almost immediately a cult favorite.

The current head of the imposing Rodgers & Hammerstein organization, Ted Chapin (himself from a background of theatrical agents), was fortunate enough to be hired to a minimal position on FOLLIES’ production team. *Everything Was Possible: The Birth of the Musical Follies* follows Chapin’s mid-college experiences with the cast and crew of this landmark musical. Chapin’s book is a true “fly-on-the-wall” tale of what goes into putting together a Broadway musical. Gleaned from his diaries, with seemingly little editorial effort, Chapin’s voice remains rather matter-of-fact about the entire procedure. Rarely does Chapin provide gossip—curiously, there’s no mention of the homosexuality of either cast members or members of the key creative figures, though he touches on the heterosexual relationships and marriages of others. Speaking of his dates with the vivacious Yvonne DeCarlo,

Chapin’s reticence is charming. DeCarlo takes Chapin under her (right) wing, but whether or not they were “doing it” is left unsaid. The book is not for gossip-mongers, but for those curiosity seekers who want to know exactly how a musical is brought to life. Chapin documents each passing day as his position grows from go-fer to production assistant.

To understand the difficulty in assembling FOLLIES, a brief overview of the show is in order. James Goldman’s book for the show is set on the stage of a theater about to be the victim of the wrecker’s ball; a reunion of former Follies personae is taking place while phantoms of statuesque Follies girls roam the stage. Past and present converge in a seamless fashion, as old loves rekindle while self-analysis begins. Sondheim provides a song score that capably combines pastiche songs (“Broadway Baby”) with up-to-date introspective pieces (“Too Many Mornings”) that fuse the past and the present.

Chapin’s book successfully traces the hardships faced

by stars formerly associated with television (Dorothy Collins of YOUR HIT PARADE, Yvonne DeCarlo of THE MUNSTERS), A-list films (Alexis Smith of 1946’s NIGHT AND DAY, Gene Nelson of 1955’s OKLAHOMA!), B-movies (Fifi D’Orsay of 1944’s NABONGA), and the stage (Ethel Shutta of 1928’s WHOOPEE!, Mary McCarty of 1949’s MISS LIBERTY). We savor the building of a song suitable for DeCarlo (the now-classic “I’m Still Here”). We learn that, though she blew her first audition, Alexis Smith worked like a racehorse and became a Tony Award-winning, major musical theater talent as a result. And we laugh, with Chapin, as Fifi D’Orsay in her anecdotal claims to be the show’s star. Real life provides sufficient suspense when Gene Nelson faces a family crisis as the show is scheduled to open.

*Everything Was Possible* may not dispel the myth which is FOLLIES, but for those of us who prefer to keep our myths intact, Chapin’s book is just the tonic needed to quench the thirst.

—Anthony Dale

### KRITZERLAND

Bruce Kimmel

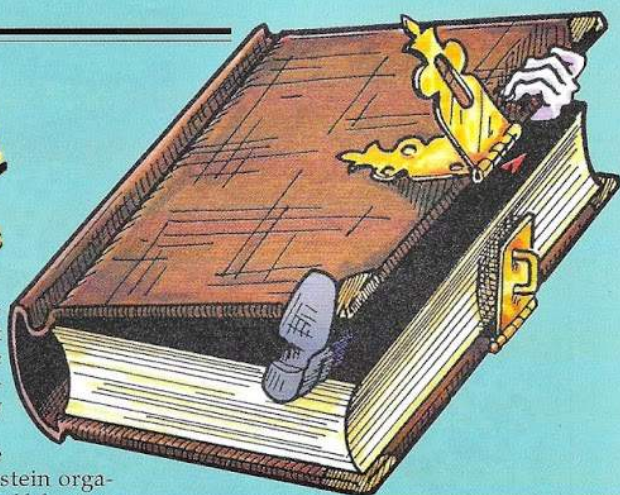
1st Books Library, 2003

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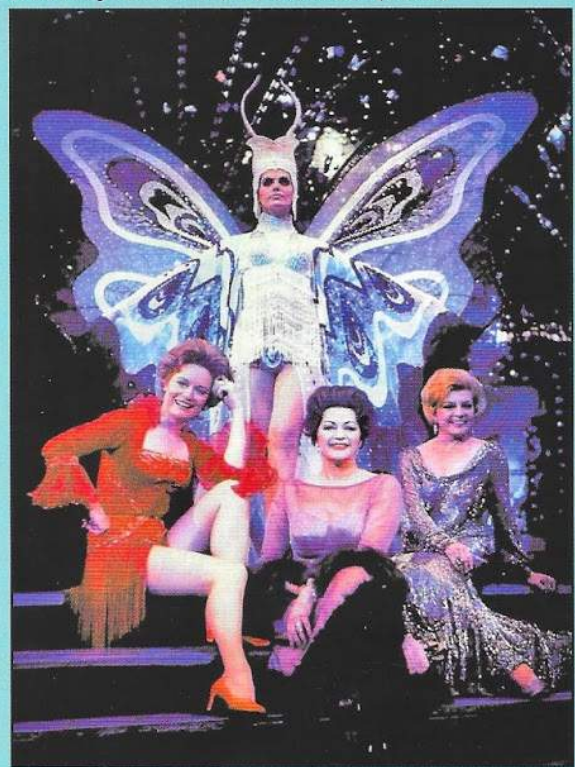
Every now and then a reviewer encounters a book that strikes so close to home that he thinks he’s reading about his own life. This is unfortunate when the book happens to be *Les Misérables* or *Crime and Punishment*, but it’s a distinct pleasure when it turns out to be Bruce Kimmel’s *Kritzerland* (2003), the second volume in his Benjamin Kritzer trilogy.

Like his brash young hero, Bruce Kimmel was born and raised in California in the 1950s. Author and subject share much in common (including a breezy writing style), which is hardly surprising. What is surprising is the number of times, while reading *Kritzerland*, that a reviewer sits up and exclaims, “Why, I did that, too!” Preteen Benjamin Kritzer goes to the movies and is annoyed that the other kids aren’t properly respectful of the moviegoing experience. (“Why, I did that, too!”) Benjamin Kritzer attends a personal appearance by

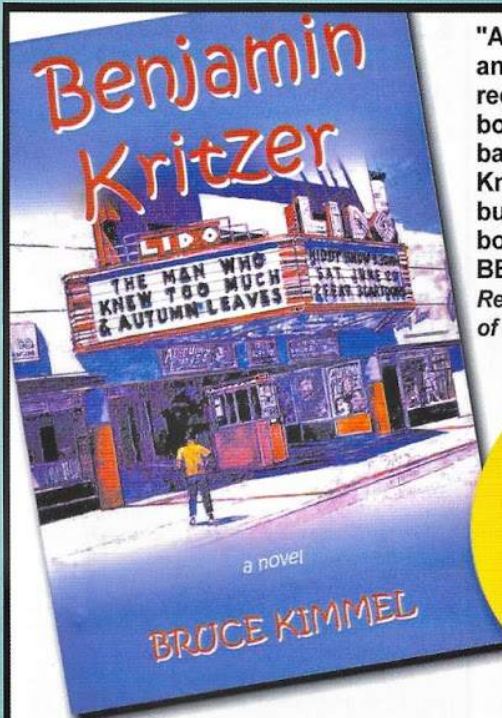
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The Ghost of Showgirls Past hovers eerily over Alexis Smith, Yvonne DeCarlo, and Dorothy Collins in FOLLIES (1971)



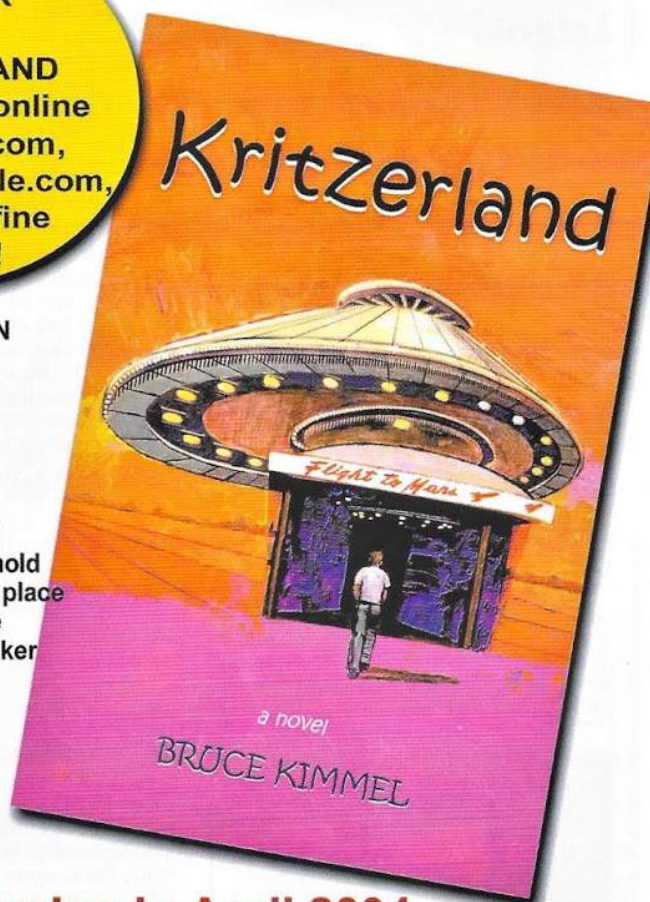




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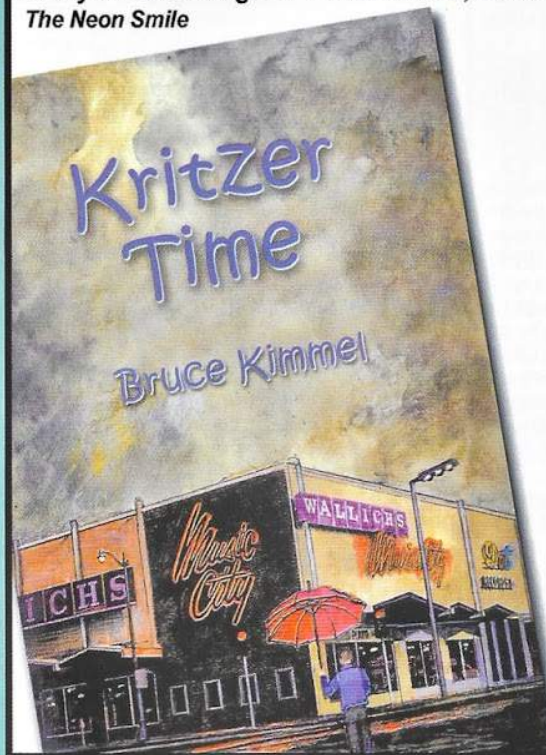
"Readers familiar with Bruce Kimmel's debut novel, BENJAMIN KRITZER, will need no prompting from me or anybody else to take a trip inside its sequel, KRITZERLAND. They've already discovered that Kimmel, relying on storytelling skill, wit and memory, has tapped into something quite wonderful with his continuing portrait of a boy coming of age in late 1950s Los Angeles. What those unfamiliar with the author's shrewdly observed, wistful tales should know is that the outspoken and idiosyncratic Benjamin, putting the pangs of adolescence on hold by losing himself to the magic of the silver screen, deserves a place on the classics shelf alongside his spiritual older brothers, the protagonists of J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and Walker Percy's *The Moviegoer*." — Dick Lochte, author of *Sleeping Dog*, *The Neon Smile*



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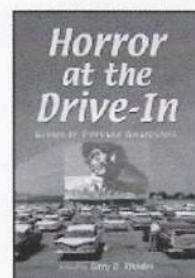
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## BOOK ENDS

*Continued from page 72*

The Three Stooges. ("Why, I did that, too!") Benjamin Kritzer goes to junior high school and hates, loathes, and despises gym class. ("Why, I did that, too!") Benjamin Kritzer forms a friendship with a chubby kid with whom he performs comedy routines. ("Why, I did that, too!") Benjamin Kritzer and the chubby kid make their own amateur movies. ("Why, I did that, too!") Benjamin Kritzer visits Paramount and the set of *LI'L ABNER* and . . . ("Okay, I didn't do that, but I would have if I hadn't been living in New Jersey!")

*Kritzerland* takes Benjamin from 1958 through the start of the turbulent sixties. Along the way, those who grew up during the same period will encounter some familiar signposts—THE TWILIGHT ZONE, amusement (not theme) parks, "Volare," "The Purple People Eater," VERTIGO, VistaVision, Jerry Mahoney, CLUTCH CARGO, QUEEN FOR A DAY, "Put Your Head on My Shoulder," Fizzies, Flavor Straws, and PSYCHO.

In *Kritzerland*, Benjamin has more or less made peace with the fact that his family seems to come from Mars and—as indicated by the Bar Mitzvah that brackets the main action—is well on his way to becoming a man. If he still pines for the lost Susan Pomeroy of Benjamin Kritzer (2002), he's not above forming a budding relationship with a new girl in high school. And if he again encounters a little childhood heartbreak, he's learned better how to cope with it. Like Daisy Clover singing "You're Gonna Hear From Me," he seems poised for great things. Thank God there's a final chapter of his story yet to come! Meanwhile, *Kritzerland* is a great place to visit, filled with enduring images and splendid writing.

—Richard Valley

### THE COMPLETE BOOK OF GERRY ANDERSON'S UFO

Chris Bentley  
Reynolds & Hearn, 2003  
176 pages—\$24.95

With *The Complete Book of Gerry Anderson's UFO*, Chris Bentley continues his invaluable Anderson reference guides. Previous books covered THUNDERBIRDS (1964) and CAPTAIN SCARLET (1967), and now he tells us everything we want to know (but weren't afraid to ask) about Anderson's first live-action series, UFO (1970-71), from its genesis after another series (1968's SECRET SERVICE) proved too British to sell to American television, through casting, design, production, and promotion.

Bentley also touches on the Anderson produced DOPPLEGANGER/JOURNEY TO THE FAR SIDE OF THE SUN (1969), a theatrical feature (set in that far-flung year of 1980) which provided several key people for the UFO series, both behind and before the camera. For those who enjoyed this series, this book is a must-have. Ed Bishop provides an entertaining foreword.

—Kevin G. Shinnick

## SCREEN AND SCREEN AGAIN

*Continued from page 25*

Gillette), Laurel soon experiences this side of Dix's personality herself. As their relationship deepens, so do Laurel's fears and she faces a difficult choice—stay and risk bodily harm or leave and experience emotional harm.

IN A LONELY PLACE (1950) is a powerful examination of fear, doubt, and loneliness. Nicholas Ray's direction is simple, yet stylish when required, perfectly complementing Andrew Solt's tense screenplay (adapted by Edmund H. North from Dorothy B. Hughes' 1947 novel). Bogart's complex performance is perfectly balanced by Graham's—strong and assured in the opening scenes, only to slowly crumble under her increasing doubts. LONELY PLACE contains much in the style of *film noir*, but ultimately delivers a deep exploration of a love affair, one with a large price.

Columbia's DVD offers a spiffy transfer from restored elements that have been cleaned of dirt and frame damage without destroying the original grain structure. The disc also contains a few modest, but worthy extras. There's a 20-minute featurette on the making of the film, a short overview of the restoration process, a montage of artwork from Bogart's Columbia output, and a smattering of theatrical trailers. A fine presentation of one of Bogart's best, yet lesser known, performances.

—Ron Morgan

### STAR TREK III: THE SEARCH FOR SPOCK

Paramount Home Video—\$24.99

"Remember." By dropping Spock's (Leonard Nimoy's) consciousness into Dr. McCoy's (DeForrest Kelley's) noggin, the writers of STAR TREK III (1984) had their escape clause, and the race was on to restore the beloved Vulcan science officer to pointy-eared, logical life. Unfortunately, the existence of Project Genesis provides a major stumbling block, once it becomes known to Klingon Captain Krige (Christopher Lloyd), who will do anything to possess it. Another stumbling block: the starship Enterprise is about to be scrapped, and replaced by the souped-up Excelsior.

Though he's mentioned in the title, Spock is a minor character in the drama (which was certainly convenient for Nimoy's film debut as director)—but then, the sole purpose of the story is the resurrection of Mr. Spock. Naturally, that resurrection comes at a heavy price for Admiral James T. Kirk (William Shatner).

Nimoy keeps STAR TREK III moving at the brisk pace set by Nicholas Meyer in the previous film. Each member of the crew is given their moment to shine; Scotty (James Doohan) gets an espe-

*Continued on page 78*



## KATE PHILLIPS

*Continued from page 31*

back together, and he never looked cross-eyed at anybody else again. It was just a naughty phase that he was going through. He was taking out his anger. Quite frankly, with everything after FREAKS, Tod didn't give a damn. He had it made! He was married to an absolutely charming and delightful lady. They had a darling house, right on the ocean in the colony, and plenty of money. They lived a simple, quiet life. They enjoyed the way they lived.

SS: *You said the Brownings treated their home in Malibu like a Texas ranch.*

KP: Yes! When Tod was living in Malibu, he was a farmer. The land between the colony road and the highway was a big piece of land. Now it's all developed with condos and God knows what, but at the time nothing could be built there. You couldn't put in a swimming pool, because when you dug down, you hit water. You could have a tennis court, but you couldn't have a swimming pool! Anyway, who wants a swimming pool when you've got the Pacific Ocean just on the other side of your bulkhead? (Laughs) So, we had all this land, and people put in flower gardens and tennis courts. Then all of a sudden, Tod Browning said, "I'm gonna farm." He got the notion that he'd put in wheat, because he thought it would be wonderful for people to come down the highway and see this marvelous waving field of grain. Everybody said, "Toddy, look, it's too salty; you'll never be able to grow wheat." So he asked, "Well, what should I grow?" We suggested he call the Department of Agriculture and get advice. The advice he got was to plant corn or other vegetables. So he planted corn, and he cultivated it, and he did all of it with hand tools. He had the most gorgeous cornfield you've ever seen! In Malibu! He also had the greatest corn—but, I mean, how much corn can you give away? (Laughs) He sold it to the store—to Jones' store in Malibu, and he still had too much! So he opened a farm stand right on the ocean side of the highway. He sold pumpkins and everything you can think of; he supplied the entire colony with fresh vegetables and all kinds of stuff. And he loved doing it! He'd be out there early—early, every day! If it looked as though there was going to be a frost—and very often there was a frost in Malibu, because the winds would come off the ocean—he'd be out there pinning covers over his little plants. Therefore, he didn't lose anything. It was a lot of yard to take care of, but it was his devotion. He just loved it!

SS: *Browning honestly didn't miss being a filmmaker?*

KP: No, he didn't even want to talk about it. When he and Wesley Ruggles got together, they'd chat about everything but film directing! They'd talk about athletic teams and about things

that were happening in the government. He cut off everything about film. SS: *He certainly wouldn't give out interviews in later years.*

KP: No, he wouldn't! He absolutely wouldn't!

SS: *Was he bitter?*

KP: I think he just walked away. He said one time, "I don't know anybody who likes living on a pile of dirty laundry." I think he thought of himself, before he met Alice—I think he thought of himself as being part of the "dirty laundry." All I can say is, he was a father figure to me. At that point, I was in my mid-twenties. Every once in awhile, when a notice appeared in a gossip column that I'd done such-and-such with so-and-so, he had no compunction about saying, "Katie, he's bad news. Get away from him. Don't see him anymore." He and Alice were busy bringing me up and making my life more pleasant. I was one of the few people they'd call to over the bulkhead, and say, "Put the dog back in the house and come and have a bite of supper."

SS: *Was he lonely at all?*

KP: He had a couple of good friends. In the book *Dark Carnival*, it mentions his friend who was a policeman. Of course, when Alice died, that was when he pulled the shade down.

SS: *Tod Browning was a friend and neighbor, and you worked with another famous director of horror films—James Whale.*

KP: I made *GREEN HELL*, which was very interesting. The other film that I made with James Whale was *WE DARE NOT LOVE*. We had three directors! (Laughs) James Whale was the original director and he was taken off the picture. Somebody else was put on and then he was taken off the picture and somebody else was put on! That was done at Columbia.

SS: *And *GREEN HELL* was for Universal, where he made most of his films.*

KP: *GREEN HELL*! Oh, dear; *GREEN HELL* was really green hell! (Laughs)

SS: *It's considered by many to be one of the worst films ever made.*

KP: Oh, I'm not surprised! We slumped along in the mud of a tropical rain forest set for about five weeks and everybody was just dying! Vincent Price, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Joan Bennett—and when they finally got through with the cutting, I had one scene in which I didn't say a word!

SS: *After five weeks!*

KP: We were on it longer than that; we were on it about seven weeks. They found that it was so bad and had so much wrong with it that they kept having different people trying to fix it. There were too many cooks. Too many people were coming around, saying, "Well, so and so says it ought to be this way or that way."

SS: *Was the original script itself so bad?*

KP: It wasn't bad, but it was sort of old hat. It was all about people in the jungle looking for treasure and what happens to them. It was quite an experience making that film, and it stunk!

(Laughs) It smelled so bad! I mean that literally! Well, you can imagine watering down the mud and all the trees and plants and stuff—it all just rotted and stunk! When the plants rotted down at the bottom, they would cut 'em off and the jungle would get shorter! They'd replace 'em when they got too short. We had very little ventilation; there was no air conditioning, of course, and it steamed and it smelled. SS: *This was shot in the studio?*

KP: In the studio at Universal.

SS: *It wasn't shot on the back lot?*

KP: It was shot inside, on a sound stage. That's why it got so smelly! Universal had the back lot and they had several ranches—but no, this was done on the sound stage. God love us!

SS: *It's amazing that James Whale, who had been Universal's top director, had to put up with that.*

KP: When I knew James Whale, he was a very sick man. He was a very sick man. He was—it was past being neurotic. He was psychotic as hell!

SS: *Was this during the making of *THEY DARE NOT LOVE*? He was replaced...*

KP: Yes, he was.

SS: *Was it because he was drinking?*

KP: No, he wasn't drinking. Martha Scott and George Brent and Paul Lukas and I were the four characters in the film; it was about a monarchy in Europe that was broke. The man who played the prime minister was Paul Lukas, and the crown prince was George Brent. Martha Scott played the daughter of the prime minister who had died. The prince was in love with her. After her father's death, she had come to the United States because she hadn't been out in the world, and she was working in a dress shop. I played the richest girl in the world, and the prime minister had an idea that the prince would marry me and the country would be financially solvent—as though I was Barbara Hutton. (Laughs)

SS: *That doesn't sound like a very promising plot.*

KP: When we started the film, James Whale was the director. He took to mumbling. He would walk onto the set mumbling, and then all of a sudden he'd say, "All right! Let's do it!" We didn't know what the hell he wanted us to do! We didn't even know where he wanted us to go, but we would get up and try. And then all of a sudden, he'd scream, "Of all the stupid fucking people that I have ever seen in my life, you people are—this picture is going to stink! I have the two lousiest actors and the two worst actresses in town on this picture!"

SS: *That's so unlike anything that's ever been said before about James Whale!*

KP: So, we'd just sit and do nothing. Then, one day, Martha Scott's husband came on the set, because we were getting a little upset about Whale's behavior. Martha and I had no illusions about our looks, but we didn't think we were as bad as Whale claimed we

*Continued on page 81*





## JOAN

*Continued from page 41*

The apartment was the most luxurious I'd ever seen. The building was owned by Loretta Young and decorated beautifully by her mother. The fireplace soon crackled with aged oak, a perfume of heavy exotica suddenly cracked into being...

Everything she had was real. There were no scars, and shortly there would be no mysteries. I explored them all. "My God," she said, "My God, with what you've got, you don't

have to do that. But... that's it... right there... don't stop. Fuck, baby, don't stop."

The Queen Bee had become a real-life drama, in spite of Al Steele's sometimes hazy appearances. Joan and I repeated our dinners at Frascati's. Whatever else we repeated, never seemed repetitious; it was always like a first time. She was exotic beyond the meaning of the word. I don't know who Kirk Douglas was talking about in his autobiography; he must have been with the wrong Joan Crawford.

"I'm taking the *Ile de France* after we finish the picture; shall I get three tickets?" she asked, whimsically.

"You mean Al, too?" I asked, in response.

"Hell, no," was her retort. "I don't want him throwing up all across the Atlantic. But I have to know how many tickets. My secretary, my me, and I hope my you."

"Get three," I said hungrily. "I have to go to Arizona for a few days." (I had built a tennis club in Scottsdale and it needed attention, lots of it.) It seems I gave it too much attention. One week later, in the *Arizona Globe*, another headline: "Joan Crawford elopes with Al Steele." So the cola merchant taught her to fly.

Ten years and a string of sorrows later, it was again "post time." The film was aptly named—I SAW WHAT YOU DID (1965). She was all forgiving about the *Ile de France*, and I was all forgiving about the cola merchant.

## THE GREAT CHAN BAN

*Continued from page 71*

At a later date, however, Roger Fan made a very interesting comment concerning Charlie's sons. "What I think is more interesting is—currently on national network TV today—and cable—we do not have roles as big or as three-dimensional or as good as the two Charlie Chan sons that are on right now." That's probably true, but if anything, it makes the case that the films were a huge step forward and that, if anything, they should be shown now to illustrate that only backwards progress has been made.

In the end, the discussions—if they can be called that—served little function, because there was no exchange of ideas, merely what turned out to be justification for banning the films, which have presumably returned to the vaults for whatever fate awaits them.

One thing is certain—no one involved in the banning took into account the ire of movie fans when they went into this. There's perhaps a certain aptness in that. Consider an exchange (cribbed from one of Biggers' novels) between a much later Charlie Chan, Roland Winters, and a

The first thing she mentioned about her marriage to Steele was the honeymoon in Paris. The Plaza Athenee Hotel, where Steele accused her of being in love with their chauffeur. Where he almost knocked her over a railing into the courtyard below. "Christ," she said, "this was our honeymoon, and I was paying for it." His money, he told her, was all tied up in Pepsi stock, but when they got back he would repay her. It never happened.

That night, I invited her to Chasen's, possibly the finest restaurant in all of California. James Woolf, the producer, who had starred Joan in *THE STORY OF ESTHER COSTELLO* (1957); Laurence Harvey, my best friend; my lovely wife, Daphne; and my idiot self, waited for Joan to arrive. Suddenly, Daphne said, "My God, John, why are you not picking up Joan?" I had come directly from a wardrobe fitting at the studio, and stupidly thought it improper to do so, now being married.

Joan Crawford arrived by limousine, unescorted, probably for the first time in her life. She looked radiant, there were still "no scars," no eyelift, no "skin tightening" makeup—but perhaps there was a scar, or at least the beginnings of one. She was no longer Joan Crawford, one of Hollywood's biggest stars; she was now Joan Crawford, Pepsi representative emeritus, mistress of the New York apartment owned by Pepsi, mistress of all she used to possess. Now she was getting \$25,000 for one week's work. She was mistress of a grade B melodrama. I think I hurt more than she did.

"All right, bring 'um in." The first assistant director screamed out the instructions, loud and clear. Joan and I were going over our next scene, in her dressing room, on Stage 11. Joan asked, with some agitation, "What did he say?" "He said, 'Bring 'um in,'" I replied.

It was our first day's shooting on *I SAW WHAT YOU DID*. I waited, the crew waited, and the director waited. At Joan's request, the head of the studio arrived—and now, he too waited. Joan worked on her agitation. "What did you yell at us?" she asked the first assistant director. "I said, 'Bring 'um in,'" he responded, with a touch of arrogance.

Joan really let go with a burst of sincere emotion. "Young man," she said, "I don't know who the hell 'um' is on this set, but let me tell you something—even cattle have names. Now this is Mr. Ireland and I'm Miss Crawford. I suggest you learn your craft and manners on some other set, not mine." She was still a star.

Whenever I see one darting across the sky, I think fondly of her. It is now "past post time."

character named Oscar Swenstrom (Harry Hayden) in *DOCKS OF NEW ORLEANS* (1948):

"I'm afraid I underestimated you when first we met, Mr. Chan," Swenstrom tells Charlie. "Yes, that are customary," replies Charlie. "Only important thing is that you do not underrate me when we part."

"I am, too, wearing more eye makeup!" swears Karloff.





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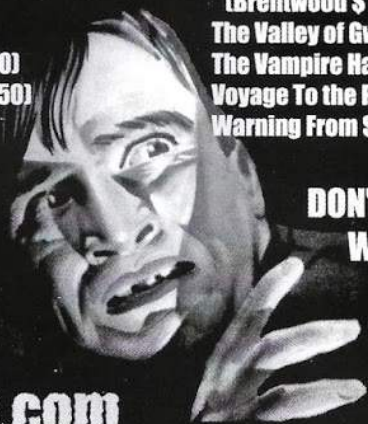


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## SCREEN AND SCREEN AGAIN

*Continued from page 74*

cially delightful moment in the sun. Nimoy also navigates through some tricky obstacles, including a new actress (Robin Curtis) as Saavik, a disappointing re-tread of a score by James Horner, and Christopher Lloyd's one-note (if colorful) performance as the Klingon heavy. Even so, he manages to make it all work very well, despite the predictability of the story's outcome.

For its double-disc reissue, *STAR TREK III* was left untouched; a Collector's Edition rather than a Director's Edition. The movie itself looks identical to the previous, bare bones disc. The selling point of the set is the wealth of extras. Disc One features a commentary track by Nimoy, producer Harve Bennett, and Robin Curtis, as well as the now-traditional "text only" commentary. Unfortunately, the first commentary redundantly covers much of the same ground as some of the extras on Disc Two. And Disc Two is a mixed bag—some terrific material on the making of the film, with interviews of the cast and special-effects crew, storyboards, and the obligatory theatrical trailer. There's also a documentary called *YERRAFORMING AND THE PRIME DIRECTIVE*, which doesn't have a lot to do with the movie, but is fascinating on its own terms.

The Collectors Edition subtitle, in this case, is a perfect description of its intended audience: the serious *STAR TREK* fan. Since it's actually priced lower than the initial DVD release, it's an attractive buy. However, the extras can't justify the expense of replacing the disc on the shelf of the casual fan.

—Robin Anderson

## PANDORA AND THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

Kino on Video—\$29.95

Part mood piece, part love story, director/writer Albert Lewin's *PANDORA AND THE FLYING DUTCHMAN* (1951) is an ambitious undertaking that comes close to achieving something special. Expatriate Pandora Reynolds (Ava Gardner), a nightclub singer whose beauty destroys nearly all the men who come into her orbit, is living a restless life among her rich British friends in the coastal town of Esperanza, Spain. Emotionally unfulfilled, but pleased by the power she wields over the opposite sex, she sees one man (Marius Goring) poison himself over her and another (Nigel Patrick) consent to push his race car into the sea at her request.

Pandora herself is obsessed with a yacht that sits out in the bay. One night, she sheds her clothes and swims to it, only to find a single person on-board, Hendrick van der Zee (James Mason), who thinks nothing of a naked woman showing up on his boat. Hendrick has just finished painting Pandora in

*Continued on page 80*

## THE SHERLOCK HOLMES COLLECTION (Volumes One and Two)

MPI Home Video

\$69.98 each

The release this year by MPI Home Video of all 14 Sherlock Holmes films made by Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce from 1939 to 1946 is cause for celebration for connoisseurs of the Great Detective.

After decades of watching these classic films (two from 20th Century Fox, 12 from Universal) in less than pristine condition, these boxed sets are a revelation to behold. Each film is restored to its proper theatrical aspect ratio of 1.37:1, with the Universal logos and introductions of Holmes and Watson walking in the London fog intact. The sound is enhanced by Dolby Digital monaural tracks, allowing the viewer to enjoy these presentations restored to their original splendor.

The premier boxed set includes the very first Universal film in the series—*SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE VOICE OF TERROR* (1942)—plus *SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE SECRET WEAPON* (1942), *SHERLOCK HOLMES IN WASHINGTON* (1943), and *SHERLOCK HOLMES FACES DEATH* (1943). The first three films place Holmes in the unlikely circumstance of fighting the Axis threat of WWII! Viewed in the context of the time, with period films out of fashion, it is understandable that Universal would try to create entertainment that addressed the realities of war with spies and secret agents rather than the mysteries concealed in the London fog or in the manor houses of rural England. Thus—with the blessing of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's son—the series arrived in theaters to great box office success. These films benefit from the participation of screen villains Lionel Atwill, Henry Daniell, and George Zucco—all of whom had the distinction of portraying Professor Moriarty during the series. Zucco was definitive in his masterful interpretation in *THE ADVENTURES OF*

*SHERLOCK HOLMES* (1939), made by 20th Century Fox before the series moved to Universal. (MPI will release the film in 2004 along with the other Fox entry, 1939's *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES*.) However, Lionel Atwill is quite memorable in *SECRET WEAPON*, with cobra-lidded eyes and wickedly hissing his dialogue at Holmes. "The needle to the end," mocks Atwill's Moriarty, acknowledging the detective's penchant for his seven percent solution the one and only time at Universal.

The fourth film in the set is a most welcome return to classic form, with a plot involving dark secrets in an old dark house. *SHERLOCK HOLMES FACES DEATH* is more of a murder mystery than the other three, and for my money the most satisfying in the traditional sense of Holmes as the world's greatest consulting detective. The film is greatly enhanced by the still standing burial vault set from *DRACULA* (1931), giving the mystery a perfect location for its shadowy conclusion. Halliwell Hobbs has the role of a lifetime as the ill-fated butler, Brunton. Hobbs—a staple in Universal horrors playing policemen and servants—shows a talent for comedy and his timing is flawless.

Having grown up with these films, it is almost impossible to dislike any of them. Each is entertaining and filled with character actors I have admired for a lifetime. The collection is simply too great not to own each and every one of these films.

Nevertheless, if I were stranded on a desert island with only one volume of this series, it would have to be Volume Two, which has all my favorite Sherlock Holmes films in one box. *THE SCARLET CLAW* (1944) is very nearly a horror film, with fog-shrouded moors and glow-in-the-dark phantoms for Holmes and Dr. Watson to investigate. It looks like the pair has wandered onto the set of *THE WOLF MAN* (1941)! *THE PEARL OF DEATH* (1944) pits Holmes against The Creeper, a character so over the

*Continued on page 82*





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## SCREEN AND SCREEN AGAIN

Continued from page 78

the guise of the legendary Greek busybody of the same name, although he has presumably never seen the present-day Pandora before. Archeologist and narrator Geoffrey Fielding (Harold Warrender) senses a parallel to the legend of the Flying Dutchman. As Hendrick translates the story, we see him reenact the tragic story of a captain who jealously murders his wife for an imagined infidelity. Escaping execution, the captain returns to his ship, only to realize that he has been condemned to sail the seas for eternity until he can find a woman willing to die for his love.

Ava Gardner is perfectly cast as a woman who realizes that her ethereal lure hides an empty soul, longing to lose her heart to another. Photographed lovingly by Jack Cardiff in Technicolor, she looks every bit as irresistible as is required by the story. Mason is given the more difficult task of playing someone passive and remote, who nonetheless harbors considerable pain and longing. His stoic and brooding behavior does not make for the most romantic of romances. The film, although intelligently written and full of such memorable imagery as Greek statues dotting the landscape, an auto race on the beach, and a nighttime bullfight, does not know when to quit and overextends its welcome by a good half-hour. Lewin's vision, at times haunting and mystical, ultimately remains as unfulfilled as Pandora.

Cardiff's striking color schemes are still evident on the Kino DVD, but many of the scenes are muddy-looking and full of scratches. One extra is indicated in the menu, the other is not. The former is an original trailer for the MGM release of the British production, hosted by Hedda Hopper, who boasts that Ava Gardner will become "Miss Glamour of 1951." Not listed is the alternate USA opening credits, which are identical to the British print except for the substitution of a written explanation of the Flying Dutchman legend in place of a quotation from the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*.

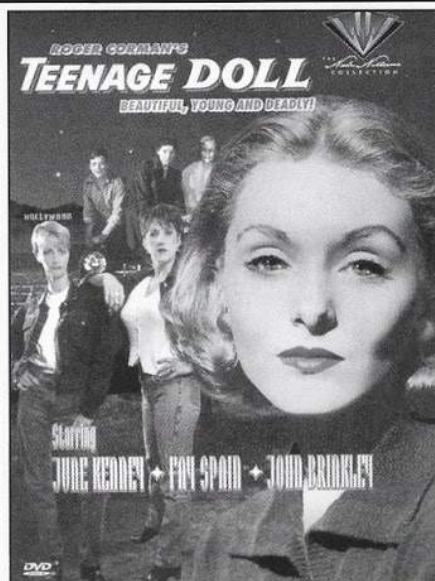
—Barry Monush

### TEENAGE DOLL

Image Entertainment—\$24.99

Roger Corman's *TEENAGE DOLL* (1957) is one of the better examples of the female juvenile delinquency subgenre of fifties and sixties cinema. It's never as exploitative as *ONE WAY TICKET TO HELL* (1952), *THE VIOLENT YEARS* (1956), *HIGH SCHOOL HELLCATS* (1958), or *TEENAGE GANG DEBS* (1966). The entire plot unfolds over the course of one night, in real time.

Barbara Bonney (June Kenney), a slumming middle-class teenager, has inadvertently killed a member of the female Black Widows gang. The Widows' leader, Hel (Fay Spain), dispatches her subordinate to track down the guilty girl.



Barbara's ineffectual parents don't comprehend her plight, so she seeks protection from the rival Vandals. A junkyard rumble erupts between the two gangs, forcing police intervention.

The film offers somewhat more in the way of social commentary than others of its ilk, displaying arresting images of urban squalor and neglect. Corman's uncharacteristically somber storytelling would later be reflected in his race relations drama *THE INTRUDER* (1962), now considered one of his finest works. *DOLL*, by comparison, bears a stage-bound appearance. The artificiality of the interior sets clashes with the teens' transitory activities. Neither of these films fared well at the box office, causing the director to abandon such sober motifs in his other productions.

*TEENAGE DOLL* features some familiar Corman cohorts. Cinematographer Floyd Crosby and screenwriter Charles B. Griffith ply their trades, while the supporting cast features Richard Devon, Bruno Ve Sota, Barboura Morris, Dorothy Neumann, and Ed Nelson. Neumann affectingly essays Barbara's lost soul of a mother, but wears braids that make one uncomfortably imagine a 50-something Pippi Longstocking. The actresses who portray the Black Widows are all credible, but John Brinkley goes over the top as the leader of the Vandals. That's unfortunate, because his character spouts much of the script's class conflict message.

Image's DVD evidences a fair amount of grain, but nevertheless provides a fine transfer. In fact, the unusually luminous source print reveals the limitations of the sound stages. Still, it's fun to perceive numerous visual details that remain indiscernible in most available prints. The image is exhibited full-frame, losing no significant picture information from the sides. The disc includes a trailer that predictably plays up the film's more lurid aspects.

—John F. Black

## OZONE

Tempe Video—\$19.95

Forget about Robert Rodriguez making *EL MARIACHI* (1992) for under \$30,000—10 years ago, director J. R. Bookwalter made a full-length feature with makeup and special effects for \$3,500! Now, to mark its anniversary, Tempe has put out a special edition of the offbeat sci-fi actioner *OZONE* (1994).

Back in the eighties, video stores were anxious for product. After such films as *BLOOD CULT* (1985) proved there was a market for shot-on-video "films," small indie producer Cinema Group cranked out such weekend wonders as *GALAXY OF THE DINOSAURS* (1992) and *CHICK BOXER* (92) for about \$2,500 apiece. The profits were great, but the films were just slightly less enjoyable to watch than your relative's vacation movies. Realizing this, director Bookwalter took over a year to film and edit this enjoyable popcorn movie, filling it with homages to various genres and directors.

When hardboiled dick Eddie Boone (James Black) loses his partner (Tom Hoover) in the drug wars, he makes it his personal mission to find the dealer of the newest and deadliest drug at the moment—Ozone. When he himself gets injected with the dangerous concoction, he begins to see things he never saw before—monsters and mutants, who are dealers and users of Ozone. Boone finds himself starting to undergo a metamorphosis—the drug affects different people in various ways; some melt; some explode—so it is a race against time to find and destroy the powerful Drug Lord (James L. Edwards).

Shot on S-VHS, *OZONE*'s picture quality is quite good—and all the more impressive when we learn, in the accompanying documentary (*PAYING FOR YOUR SINS: THE OZONE STORY*), that, to cut costs, the filmmakers used tapes previously used. The extras are plentiful and include clips of the Spanish dub, behind-the-scenes footage, commentary tracks, trailers for other Tempe releases, and an Easter egg.

—Kevin G. Shinnick

### I LOVE LUCY (Volumes Five and Six)

Paramount/CBS DVD—\$14.99 each

Oh, for corn sakes, Ethel—Paramount has released Volumes Five and Six of *I LOVE LUCY*. Each volume contains four fun-filled episodes as funny as the day they first aired.

In "Lucy Fakes an Illness" (January 28, 1952), the madcap redhead tries once again—and rest assured, not for the last time—to break into show business. Unfortunately, she develops a case of the go-bloots and there's a good chance she might need a zorchectomy. "Lucy Writes a Play" (February 4, 1952) has our heroine turning playwright for her Wednesday Afternoon Fine Arts League. There's a contest and a good shot at a Hollywood production. "Breaking the

Continued on page 82



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## JULIE HARRIS

*Continued from page 50*

things can really happen. I was always very attuned to the Jewish problem and, for that matter, to any problem of prejudice. I don't understand prejudice. I don't understand how one person can say, "I'm better than you are." I don't understand that concept.

**SS:** In 1976, you gave a Tony-winning performance as Emily Dickenson in *THE BELLE OF AMHERST*. Would you say solo performing is more difficult than being able to interact with other actors?

**JH:** I don't think so, no. It's definitely a special kind of performing, but I don't think it's any more difficult. I had the good fortune to work with a wonderful director, Charles Nelson Reilly.

**SS:** Many of your fans today remember you as Lilian Clements on the popular TV series *KNOTS LANDING*. When you first appeared on the show in 1981, did you expect to remain in the cast for the next seven years?

**JH:** No, not at all, but I enjoyed it. I liked the directors who did the show, and I liked the cast very much.

**SS:** In 1988, you appeared as Roz Carr in *GORILLAS IN THE MIST*.

**JH:** This was an important one for me, because we worked with Roz Carr in her home in Rwanda and she has since become an everlasting friend. She's gone through terrible times. When the genocide happened in 1994, she finally had to flee. When she came back a couple of months later, her house had been destroyed and everything was gone. She's now 85 and has an orphanage in Gisenyi, Rwanda, for 95 children whose families were killed during the genocide.

**SS:** Have you ever felt that you'd like to replay a movie role and do it differently?

**JH:** Yes, the part in *THE HAUNTING*. I would have liked to have done that differently. I had a different feeling about it, but I couldn't do it because the director didn't agree with me.

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**SS:** What would you have done differently?

**JH:** Well, I would've been odder looking as Eleanor. I think she was too ordinary. I just wanted to be—odder.

**SS:** You've given so many fine performances opposite such wonderful actors.

**JH:** I'll tell you, I made a TV film called *ONE CHRISTMAS* with Katharine Hepburn. She was not very well. My great friend, Noel Taylor, was the costume designer on the film. On my first day of work, which just happened to be Miss Hepburn's last day, they were doing my makeup and hair and Noel said, "Miss Hepburn would like to say hello to you. It's her last day and she'll be going home tomorrow. If you'll wait around, she just has two more shots and she'll be through." I said, "Okay," and stood around and watched her. She was absolutely marvelous! Then, after her scenes, Noel took me over to where she was sitting. Well, she looked up at me and said, "Who are you?" (Laughs) I thought, "Oh, now, that's a good beginning!" I said, "Well, Miss Hepburn, my name is Julie Harris and I'm doing a small part in this film." And she said, "Oh." She was very curt and short. Not a good beginning. Later, Noel told me that they had rented her a house out on the beach and Miss Hepburn would like us to come to an early dinner. So, I bought her a little gift and we went out to this beach house. She was sitting in the living room and, as I came up to her, she said, "Who are you?" (Laughs) Well, I thought, "This is really not my day!" I said, "Miss Hepburn, my name is Julie Harris. I have a small part in this film." She said, "Oh. Well—what'll you have to drink?" I said, "Actually, I have an early call tomorrow morning, so I won't be drinking." And she said, "You don't drink?" (Laughs) But, you have to understand, she had been in an accident and had crushed her foot, so she had her foot up and was in a lot of pain. Plus, she'd been working many

**WANTED:** photos, articles, press material on the films *SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE*, *ENTERTAINING MR. SLOANE*, *DEEP END*. Also VHS or DVD of *CONFESSIONS OF FELIX KRULL* (starring John Moulder-Brown). E-mail Richard Valley at [reditor@aol.com](mailto:reditor@aol.com).

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"Who's that knocking on my door?" ask Julie Harris and Claire Bloom in *THE HAUNTING* (1963). One hint: it ain't Barnacle Bill the Sailor!

long hours on the film and she was just cranky. Still, I've decided that, if I ever write my autobiography, the title will be, "Who Are You?"

## KATE PHILLIPS

*Continued from page 75*

were! We just weren't enjoying making the film, so Martha asked her husband to come on the set, and he did. Well, Martha and I had a scene together. It was an easy scene and very interesting, but we didn't quite get through with it when Whale jumped up and started stamping his feet and screaming, "Not only do I have the two ugliest broads in town, I've got the two lousiest fucking actresses!" At that, Martha's husband got up and walked over to Whale and said, "I know you're older than I am, but if you say one more word to my wife and to Kate, I'm going to knock you down. I'm going over to Harry Cohn and tell him how you're behaving." And he did! Harry Cohn came back with him, and he took Mr. Whale's elbow and walked him over to the corner, and that's the last we saw of James Whale!

**Continued Next Issue . . .**



## SHERLOCK HOLMES

*Continued from page 78*

top that actor Rondo Hatton was allowed to play the role in several further films until his death in 1946. **SPIDER WOMAN** (1944) gives Mr. Holmes a female Moriarty in Adrea Spedding, played by Gale Sondergaard. What a pleasure to watch these two pros at work! Incidentally, Sondergaard was honored in 1981 by the Los Angeles chapter of the Sherlock Holmes society the Non-Canonical Calabashes, who, unable to locate a print of **SPIDER WOMAN**, screened **FACES DEATH** instead! Watching the film for the first time, Sondergaard remarked, "Basil never acted Holmes. He *was* Holmes." It's a point well taken, since this is the key to Rathbone's success with the character. **THE HOUSE OF FEAR** (1945), based on Conan Doyle's "The Five Orange Pips" (1891) is also a return to formula, as the pair investigate a series of murders in an old manor house. There's a surprise ending that still works its magic more than half a century later!

MPI Home Video's boxed editions have great supplemental material, beginning with a superb commentary from noted Holmes scholar (and *Scarlet Street* contributor) David Stuart Davies. Davies knows his Conan Doyle and offers real insight into how these films were fashioned together from bits and pieces of the canon to make entertainment for wartime audiences unfamiliar with *The Great Detective*. *Scarlet Street* publisher/editor Richard Valley is the perfect man to put in charge of each volume's extensive liner notes. His knowledge of both Conan Doyle and the Rathbone/Bruce series films is encyclopedic and matched with a wry sense of humor. Valley guides us through each film, enhancing our appreciation of every title. The supplements are rounded off with a photo gallery and a collection of original poster art. These two boxed sets are a must-have for any serious collector of Sherlock Holmes—or, for that matter, any connoisseur of classic films.

—David Del Valle



## SCREEN AND SCREEN AGAIN

*Continued from page 80*

**Lease** (February 15, 1952) has the Ricardos trying to get out of a 99-year lease from landlords Fred and Ethel Mertz (William Frawley and Vivian Vance). "The Ballet" (February 18, 1952) has Lucy attending a ballet class instructed by Madame LeMond (the ever popular Mary Wickes). A *bas* seems to be the only French word that Lucy learns.

Volume Six offers more of the hilarious same. In "The Young Fans" (February 25, 1952), neighbor Peggy (Janet Waldo) falls for Ricky. With the help of a young man named Arthur (Richard Crenna) and some clever makeup, Peggy finally realizes that Ricky is not for her. In "New Neighbors" (March 3, 1952), the O'Brians (Hayden Rorke and K. T. Stevens) move into 623 E. 68th Street. Lucy and Ethel don't realize that the new tenants are actors and, when Lucy gets stuck inside the closet (snooping against Ricky's orders), she hears the O'Brians rehearsing a script in a distinctly foreign tongue. Believing them to be foreign agents, Lucy alerts the rest of the crew. With the help of the police and a night behind bars, the "case" is solved. "Fred and Ethel Fight" is the title of the March 10, 1952, episode. (So what else is new, you say!) Fred and Ethel have a blowout and it's up to Lucy and Ricky to reunite them. During the dinner that Lucy cleverly puts together, a new fight erupts—between the Ricardos! Lucy looks like Father Christmas in "The Moustache" (March 17, 1952). In an effort to get Ricky to shave off his moustache, Lucy dons a white beard and moustache from Fred's vaudeville trunk. The plan backfires when Ricky shaves off his 'stache, but Lucy's beard remains intact.

Both discs contain such special features as the series' original opening score, the famous **I LOVE LUCY** overture, special footage, radio shows, guest cast information, production notes, and Spanish subtitles. The episodes are timeless and all **I LOVE LUCY** will cherish these latest volumes for years to come.

—Dan Clayton

## THE GHOST AND MRS. MUIR

20th Century Fox Home Video—\$14.98

Fox continues its exemplary series of Studio Classics on DVD with the welcome release of **THE GHOST AND MRS. MUIR** (1947), an unjustly neglected masterpiece of romantic fantasy starring Gene Tierney as a young widow sharing a seaside cottage with the ghost of a lusty, blustering sea captain (played by the dashing and wonderful Rex Harrison). With his fourth feature, director Joseph L. Mankiewicz established himself as an artist of depth and discrimination, molding Philip Dunne's superb, Oscar-nominated screenplay into a cinematic treat that suggests the more widely celebrated treasures soon to come (1949's **A LETTER TO THREE WIVES**, 1950's **ALL ABOUT EVE**) but stands on level footing with them as well.

Always at his best when depicting the interplay of complex, expressive in-



dividuals negotiating unconventional relationships, **GHOST** presents Mankiewicz with a pair for whom physical limitation results in a love affair based on companionship and mutual admiration. Mankiewicz knows how to make brilliant use of such characters without compromising the integrity of the script's established reality or making their association seem incomplete.

The lovely Tierney follows **LAURA** (1944) and **LEAVE HER TO HEAVEN** (1945) with another laudable interpretation of a take-charge woman ("I've always wanted to be considered obstinate."), one whose potential has gone largely unfulfilled until the untimely demise of her husband affords her the opportunity to begin life over again. In singular fashion, Lucy Muir—who refuses to regard childbirth as the culmination of her being (button-cute Natalie Wood hangs about the background throughout the proceedings, the filmmakers declining wisely to exploit her ringleted adorableness to saccharine, family-friendly effect as, say, MGM might have done with Margaret O'Brien in the role)—chooses to live alone and like it, and it is this and other demonstrations of independent spunk that appeal to the similarly iconoclastic Captain Gregg (Harrison) and draws his spirit to her. Only in the last quarter, when she goes all fluttery over silken swine Miles Fairley (George Sanders), does Mrs. Muir momentarily revert to the same emotional impulsiveness that led her to make an imprudent marriage as a girl. The script becoming slightly (but quite satisfactorily) schizophrenic, reminding her (and us) of the perils of compromising one's ideals in exchange for halfhearted participation in life, then celebrating the blunders one must invariably make in the act of living in a speech the captain delivers at the end. ("You've chosen life. And that's as it should be. Whatever the reckoning.") At the same time, conveniently (and, this being a work of whimsy and not Edith Wharton, quite happily), plot developments prevent her from making a mistake and wasting the last half of her life as much as she has the first.

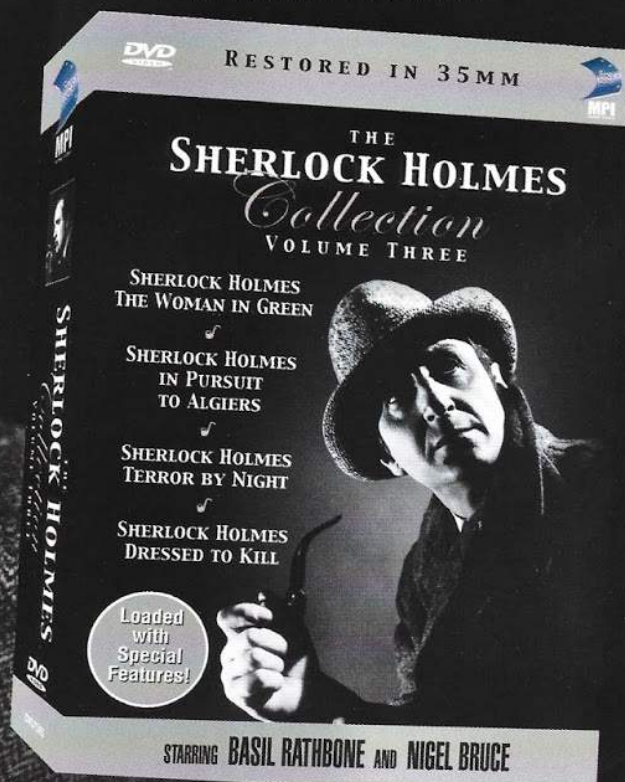
The technical aspects of the picture are perfection, with Bernard Herrmann's score deriving its inspiration from the sea, as it rises and falls and provides a hypnotic undercurrent to Mrs. Muir's quietly passionate existence. DVD extras don't amount to much, but a nearly pristine print of a bloody marvelous film is more than enough to compensate.

—Jon Anthony Carr



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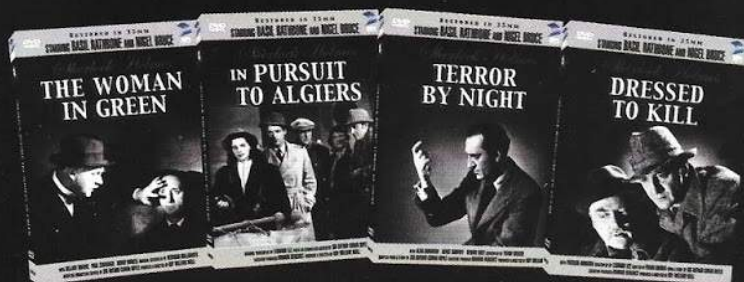
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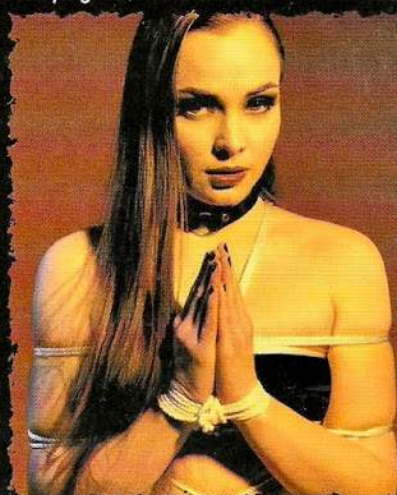
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DIGITALLY RESTORED  
IN 35MM



THE  
**SHERLOCK HOLMES**  
*Collection*  
VOLUME ONE

THE  
**SHERLOCK HOLMES**  
*Collection*  
VOLUME ONE



**SHERLOCK HOLMES  
AND THE VOICE OF  
TERROR**

*♪*  
**SHERLOCK HOLMES  
AND THE SECRET  
WEAPON**

*♪*  
**SHERLOCK HOLMES  
IN WASHINGTON**

*♪*  
**SHERLOCK HOLMES  
FACES DEATH**

Loaded with  
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STARRING **BASIL RATHBONE AND NIGEL BRUCE**



# *The Sherlock Holmes Collection*



DIGITALLY RESTORED  
IN 35MM



## VOLUME ONE

### SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE VOICE OF TERROR

STARRING BASIL RATHBONE NIGEL BRUCE WITH HILLARY BROOKE

SCREENPLAY BY LYNN RIGGS BASED ON HIS LAST BOW BY SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

PRODUCED BY HOWARD BENEDICT DIRECTED BY JOHN RAWLINS



### BASIL RATHBONE NIGEL BRUCE IN SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE SECRET WEAPON

WITH LIONEL ATWILL DENNIS HOEY

SCREENPLAY BY EDWARD T. LOWE W. SCOTT DARLING EDMUND L. HARTMAN

BASED ON THE DANCING MEN BY SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

PRODUCED BY HOWARD BENEDICT DIRECTED BY ROY WILLIAM NEILL



### BASIL RATHBONE NIGEL BRUCE SHERLOCK HOLMES IN WASHINGTON

WITH HENRY DANIELL GEORGE ZUCCO

SCREENPLAY BY BERTRAM MILLHAUSER LYNN RIGGS

PRODUCED BY HOWARD BENEDICT DIRECTED BY ROY WILLIAM NEILL



### SHERLOCK HOLMES FACES DEATH

STARRING BASIL RATHBONE NIGEL BRUCE

WITH HILLARY BROOKE DENNIS HOEY

SCREENPLAY BY BERTRAM MILLHAUSER BASED ON THE MUSGRAVE RITUAL  
BY SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY ROY WILLIAM NEILL

## THE SHERLOCK HOLMES *Collection* VOLUME ONE



SHERLOCK HOLMES  
AND THE VOICE OF  
TERROR



SHERLOCK HOLMES  
AND THE SECRET  
WEAPON



SHERLOCK HOLMES  
IN WASHINGTON



SHERLOCK HOLMES  
FACES DEATH

Loaded with  
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STARRING BASIL RATHBONE AND NIGEL BRUCE



## A MESSAGE FROM THE UCLA FILM AND TELEVISION ARCHIVE



The twelve “modern” Sherlock Holmes films included in this DVD series were originally produced by Universal Pictures sixty years ago, during and just after World War II. Universal’s rights expired in the early 1950’s, and subsequently the ownership of the films changed hands many times. As a result of this, the storage of the original 35mm nitrate picture and soundtrack negatives and the 35mm nitrate protection master copies made from these negatives was haphazard at best.

Nitrate film is inherently unstable, and many reels of the original Sherlock Holmes negatives deteriorated over the years – the picture became stained and faded, and the film base began to turn sticky and gooey before collapsing into a brownish powder. Fortunately, backup copies on nitrate fine grain master positive film had been made when the films were first produced, but these copies also began to deteriorate over the decades, and today many of the reels of nitrate master positive picture and sound no longer exist.

However, all was not lost because television distributors in the 1960’s and 1970’s made 35mm and 16mm safety copies of the films on early acetate stock. These copies were flawed in that they lacked the original main and end titles for all of the films in the series, and in addition many of them had only mediocre picture and sound quality. During the past decade, some of these acetate master positive prints and duplicate negatives have become limp and warped because of another type of deterioration known as “vinegar syndrome,” so-called because the decaying film gives off a strong odor of acetic acid and smells like salad dressing.

Because large numbers of individual reels of picture and sound of various generations were lost or survive only in a deteriorating state, the quality of the current restorations also varies. In some instances, the original nitrate camera negative is still available intact and the picture quality is excellent; in other cases, the only available elements are copies that are many generations removed from the original. Today, it is possible by means of “wet printing” to eliminate or reduce the appearance of scratches in old and worn films, but many of the Sherlock Holmes elements made years ago were printed “dry” and as a result some blemishes and flaws are photographically built-in to the film.

The current versions of these movies, assembled from materials found in England, France and America, are full length, and include all of the original main and end titles. Even the concluding announcement asking audiences to purchase war bonds on their way out of the theater is there. Though every effort has been made to restore each of the films to the best possible quality, inevitably some parts of the series look and sound better than others because of the ravages of time.



# Sherlock Holmes

## AND THE VOICE of TERROR



**"SHERLOCK HOLMES, THE IMMORTAL CHARACTER OF FICTION, CREATED BY SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, IS AGELESS, INVINCIBLE AND UNCHANGING. IN SOLVING THE SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS OF THE PRESENT DAY HE REMAINS-AS EVER-THE SUPREME MASTER OF DEDUCTIVE REASONING."**

— Universal Pictures

Thus did Universal hope to convince moviegoers that the Victorian trappings of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories—in which, as noted Sherlockian Vincent Starrett enthused, "it is always 1895"—played no vital role in the popularity of fiction's most famous character, and that the Great Detective was quite at home some 47 years past his heyday. Few were persuaded, but many were forgiving; the Universal films were simply too much fun to fuss over a few measly decades.

The late 1930s and early 1940s were a tough time for movie detectives under contract to 20th Century Fox. After producing two critically acclaimed and commercially successful Sherlock Holmes films in 1939 (*THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES* and *ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES*), the studio dropped the series in the belief that a 19th-century consulting detective would prove anachronistic in a world spinning madly toward war. The looming conflict also spelled sayonara—for obvious reasons—to the cinematic career of Japanese investigator Mr. Moto. (Moto's last appearance, before a brief comeback in 1965's *THE RETURN OF MR. MOTO*, was in 1939's *MR. MOTO TAKES A VACATION*, after which he took a vacation.) Even Earl Derr Bigger's Charlie Chan, who had been a Fox mainstay since 1931's *CHARLIE CHAN CARRIES ON*, was carried off following 1942's *CASTLE IN*

1. OPEN
2. THE VOICE OF TERROR
3. THE GREATEST CASE
4. "ENGLAND IS AT STAKE."
5. COMING TOGETHER
6. ELUDING SHERLOCK HOLMES
7. A SLY KITTY
8. SIR EVAN THE GUILTY
9. "THE FOX IS OUT OF HIS HOLE."
10. TRIAL BY HOLMES
11. END CREDITS

"GOOD OLD WATSON—THE ONE FIXED POINT IN A CHANGING AGE. THERE'S AN EAST WIND COMING ALL THE SAME, SUCH A WIND AS NEVER BLEW ON ENGLAND YET. IT WILL BE COLD AND BITTER, WATSON, AND A GOOD MANY OF US MAY WITHER BEFORE ITS BLAST—BUT IT'S GOD'S OWN WIND NONETHELESS..."

— Sherlock Holmes

*THE DESERT.* (Charlie and his numerical spawn would return via Poverty Row's Monogram Pictures in 1944's *CHARLIE CHAN IN THE SECRET SERVICE*.)

When Universal chose to produce its own series of Sherlock Holmes thrillers in 1942, it wasn't necessarily with the thought of picking up where 20th Century Fox had left off. Universal might very well have sought two stars other than Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce to play Holmes and Dr. Watson if not for the fact that Rathbone and Bruce had gone right on playing the parts after completing the second Fox film—not on movie screens, of course, but on the radio. With an occasional assist from Mary Gordon, who played Mrs. Hudson in *HOUND* and *ADVENTURES* and appeared periodically on the radio series, the dynamic duo had racked up 43 half-hour episodes—all but one based on the Conan Doyle originals—by the time Universal came knocking. (If the wartime movies seem odd, the radio shows are stranger still, with Watson cheerfully ensconced in his sunny California home, recalling cases he shared with Holmes some four or five decades earlier.) It was only natural that the studio would sign the radio stars for a new run of films, and *SHERLOCK HOLMES SAVES LONDON*—soon rechristened *SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE VOICE OF TERROR*—went into production of May 5, 1942, with Bruce no longer darkening his hair as he had in the Fox features, and Rathbone sporting a scandalously Bohemian coiffure that made it look like there was not only an east wind coming, but that it was coming from behind at an alarming rate. The film opened four months later to mixed reviews and a healthy box office.

"It is surprising that Universal should take such cheap advantage of the current crisis to exploit an old, respected fiction character," sniffed Bosley Crowther in *The New York Times* (September 19, 1942). "The late Conan Doyle, who obviously never wrote this story, as Universal claims, must be speculating sadly in his spirit world on this betrayal of trust."

True enough, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle never wrote *THE VOICE OF TERROR*, but Universal's seven-year contract with the late author's estate decreed that three Holmes films would be made

yearly, and that two out of the three would be adapted from the 21 stories purchased by the studio. For that reason (and perhaps because its plot concerns German spies), Universal's maiden effort is based on the 1917 short story "His Last Bow." The Lynn Riggs/John Bright screenplay takes little more than a few lines of dialogue and the name "Von Bork" from the source material. Instead, it spins a tale in which Holmes is engaged by Britain's Intelligence Inner Council (played by Reginald Denny, Henry Daniell, Montagu Love, and Olaf Hytten, among others) to silence the Voice of Terror, a radio propagandist predicting a series of disasters (including a train wreck lifted from 1933's *THE INVISIBLE MAN*). Holmes enlists Limehouse lowlife Gavin (Robert Barron) to gather information. Soon enough, Gavin arrives at 221B Baker Street, having gathered a knife in the back and the single word "Christopher." He dies, launching *THE VOICE OF TERROR* on the most intriguing twist in its corkscrew plot.

In Alfred Hitchcock's *NOTORIOUS* (1946), Ingrid Bergman plays Alicia Huberman, a dissolute beauty recruited by American agents to get the goods on a gang of postwar Nazis operating in South America. Alicia is expected to accomplish her mission by seducing and eventually marrying Alex Sebastian (Claude Rains), the group's leader—in other words, she must sleep with the enemy. In *THE VOICE OF TERROR*, we're introduced to Kitty, described by Holmes as the late Gavin's "sweetheart," and by another character as Gavin's wife. Most likely, Holmes is right, and Kitty is the dead man's lover and quite probably a prostitute. If she's not a fallen woman when first we meet her, she certainly becomes one, in a sequence anticipating *NOTORIOUS* by four years. Following her meeting with Holmes, Kitty "accidentally" encounters a Nazi agent named R. F. Mead as she tries to elude the police. It's all a ruse; the better to ply Mead for information that will lead Holmes to the Voice of Terror, but the Nazi doesn't know that. He hides the girl in his house and before long Kitty is living in sin with the man who—it turns out—murdered her previous lover.



# VOICE of TERROR

This is remarkably sophisticated material for a B programmer, adult and ambiguous in its delineation of the Kitty/Mead relationship. (Kitty has vowed to kill the man who killed Gavin, but in one scene she appears genuinely concerned for Mead's welfare. For his part, Mead treats her well.) That it works so well is due in no small measure to the actors playing Kitty and R. F. Mead-Evelyn Ankers and Thomas Gomez.

Born on August 17, 1918, in Valparaiso, Chile, Evelyn Ankers made her film debut in Alexander Korda's *REMBRANDT* (1936). Signed by Universal in 1941, she achieved lasting fame as one of the screen's loveliest scream queens in such Universal fright fests as *THE WOLF MAN* (1941), *THE GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1942), *SON OF DRACULA* (1943), and *THE INVISIBLE MAN'S REVENGE* (1944). Her two appearances in the Sherlock Holmes series (she plays jewel thief Naomi Drake in 1944's *THE PEARL OF DEATH*) offered roles in which she could sink her teeth, rather than costars that wanted to sink their teeth into her. Ankers' *VOICE OF TERROR* characterization is reminiscent of the Kitty Winter of Conan Doyle's 1924 adventure "The Illustrious Client," a hard-hearted, streetwise tart that at first reluctantly, then enthusiastically helps Holmes bring a villain to justice. In real life she was luckier in love, marrying fellow actor Richard Denning in 1942 and remaining happily wed until her death in 1985.

Confirmed bachelor Thomas Gomez (born Sabino Tomas Gomez in 1905) was a popular character actor on the Broadway stage, joining Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne's famed theater company in the 1930s. His role as murderous R. F. Mead in *SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE VOICE OF TERROR* marked his film debut. Gomez avoided typecasting by playing a murder victim the same year in the Abbott and Costello comedy *WHO DONE IT* (1942), and followed it with such varied characters as a movie mogul in *CRAZY HOUSE* (1943), a police inspector in *PHANTOM LADY* (1944), a theatrical

impresario in *THE CLIMAX* (1944), and a carousel owner in *RIDE THE PINK HORSE* (1947), for which he was Oscar-nominated as Best Supporting Actor. Nevertheless, Gomez spent a considerable amount of time on the wrong side of the law, most famously as hoodlum Curly Hoff in *KEY LARGO* (1948), cheerfully taking orders from his sadistic boss, Johnny Rocco (Edward G. Robinson). Gomez made his last film appearance in *BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES* (1970), dying the following year as the result of a car accident.

Though he never again appeared in the Universal series, Gomez provided Rathbone's Great Detective with a worthy adversary in 1953, when he took the role of Professor James Moriarty in the Broadway play *SHERLOCK HOLMES* (1953). The play flopped, but Gomez garnered praise. Brooks Atkinson opined in *The New York Times* (October 31, 1953): "Mr. Gomez's unctuous portrait of Moriarty makes the best foil Mr. Rathbone has in the whole cast..." New York World-Telegram critic William Hawkins agreed: "Thomas Gomez is effective as Moriarty, once he gets over discussing culture and ethics in pompous conversation with Sherlock. When he and Rathbone start stalking each other before the parapet, the play has its one brief sequence of suspense."

A final note about Universal's decision to update Holmes to the then-present day: this was not the exception, but the rule in adapting Conan Doyle's characters to the screen. The 47 Eille Norwood silent short subjects and features of the 1920s, 1922's *SHERLOCK HOLMES* (starring John Barrymore) 1929's *THE RETURN OF SHERLOCK HOLMES* (starring Clive Brook), the five Arthur Wontner films of the 1930s, 1931's *THE SPECKLED BAND* (starring Raymond Massey), 1933's *A STUDY IN SCARLET* (starring Reginald Owen), 1937's *DER HUND VON BASKERVILLE* (starring Bruno Guttner)—all take place in the year in which they were produced.

# Sherlock Holmes

## AND THE SECRET WEAPON



"NOW, HOLMES, WHAT SHALL IT BE?  
THE GAS CHAMBER? A CUP OF HEM-  
LOCK? OR JUST A SIMPLE BULLET  
THROUGH YOUR BRAIN?"

— Professor Moriarty

The world's greatest detective was back fighting the world's foremost criminal mastermind in *SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE SECRET WEAPON* (1942); an enjoyable series entry based—ever so slightly—on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's 1903 short story "The Dancing Men." Needless to say, Professor James Moriarty played no part in the original adventure—but then, neither did Nazi agents, a newfangled bombsight, espionage in Switzerland, and trap doors that open to plunge their victims into the dark and sinister Thames below. Originally titled *SHERLOCK HOLMES FIGHTS BACK*, the screenplay by Edward T. Lowe, W. Scott Darling, and Edmund L. Hartman played fast and loose with the canon, but nonetheless offered thrills played to the hilt by Basil Rathbone, Nigel Bruce, and a game supporting cast led by veteran movie villain Lionel Atwill.

"There are other Moriartys, but none so delectably dangerous as was that of Henry Daniell," wrote Basil Rathbone in his 1962 autobiography *In and Out of Character*, but Rathbone's is a minority view. Most fans prefer the Moriarty of either Atwill in *SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE SECRET WEAPON* or George Zucco in the earlier *ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES* (1939). Atwill, minus his rakish mustache and with his usually twinkling eyes heavily lidded to achieve the proper reptilian veneer, certainly matches Conan Doyle's description of Moriarty better than either Zucco or Daniell—or, for that matter, Joseph Kearns or Thomas Gomez, though they never played the role on the silver screen. Kearns, the waspish Mr. Wilson of television's *DENNIS THE MENACE*, often appeared as the professor opposite Rathbone and Bruce on the radio. Gomez-Nazi agent R. F.

1. OPEN
2. INTRIGUE IN SWITZERLAND
3. WATSON THE WATCHDOG
4. THE BLONDE BOMBSHELL
5. TOBEL DROPS A BOMB
6. "WE MEET AGAIN,  
MR. HOLMES."
7. TRACKING MORIARTY
8. THE DANCING MEN
9. CRACKING THE CODE
10. "THE NEEDLE TO THE LAST..."
11. THE COUP DE GRACE
12. END CREDITS



"MAKE NO MISTAKE, WATSON. THIS IS NOT A DUEL OF INTELLECTS WITH A CRUEL BUT SINGLE-MINDED GESTAPO KILLER. THIS IS OUR GREATEST PROBLEM, WITH ENGLAND AS THE STAKE AND OUR ANTAGONIST—PROFESSOR MORIARTY!"

—*Sherlock Holmes*

Mead in *SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE VOICE OF TERROR* (1942)—took the role in Rathbone's ill-fated Broadway play *SHERLOCK HOLMES* in 1953.

Lionel Alfred William Atwill—"Pinky" to his friends—was born in Croydon, England, on March 1, 1885. Originally destined for the life of an architect, he instead constructed a series of memorable portrayals on the stage, including Julius Caesar opposite Helen Hayes' Queen of the Nile in the 1925 Theatre Guild production of George Bernard Shaw's *CAESAR AND CLEOPATRA*. In 1930, Atwill directed the play *A KISS OF IMPORTANCE*, in which Rathbone played the leading role. Two years later, Atwill made his Hollywood film debut in *THE SILENT WITNESS*. Ironically (as it turned out), he was cast in the role of a man guilty of perjury. Atwill followed *THE SILENT WITNESS* with a string of memorable malcontents in such horror films as *DOCTOR X* (1932, in which he's suspected of being the "Moon Killer"), *THE VAMPIRE BAT* (1933, in which he drains the blood of his victims in order to keep alive his lab experiment), *MYSTERY OF THE WAX MUSEUM* (1933, in which he coats his victims in wax and displays them in his museum), and *MURDERS IN THE ZOO* (1933, in which he tosses his wife to the alligators and sews her lover's lips together). Having done all he could to foment crime, he then turned to law enforcement for *MARK OF THE VAMPIRE* (1935) and *SON OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1939), before setting up practice as Universal's all-purpose mad scientist in *MAN MADE MONSTER* (1941), *THE MAD DOCTOR OF MARKET STREET* (1942), and *THE GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1942).

Off the screen, Atwill was less criminally inclined, though far from law-abiding. According to film historian Gregory William Mank in *The Hollywood Hissables* (Scarecrow Press, 1989), the actor was a libertine who's illicit appetites, though not on as grand a scale as Professor Moriarty's, ultimately undid him. Separated from third wife Louise, Atwill opened his Pacific Palisades home to wild parties and orgies the likes of which Hollywood hadn't seen since the Roaring Twenties. Once such celebration was a 1940 Christmas gathering at which "Pinky" showed stag films (*THE*

*PLUMBER AND THE GIRL* and *THE DAISY CHAIN*) and cavorted nude with his fellow revelers. A month later, 16-year-old Sylvia Hamalaine claimed that she had been raped by one of Atwill's guests, Adolph LaRue, while another woman, Virginia Lopez, restrained her. LaRue and Lopez were arrested. Released on bail provided by Atwill, Lopez tried to blackmail the actor for \$5,000. She quickly wound up back in jail and, shortly thereafter, on trial. Called before the Grand Jury, Atwill, like his character in *THE SILENT WITNESS* nine years before, perjured himself, referring to the stag films as travelogues, denying the "wild revels by unclad guests" ever took place, and otherwise lying through his teeth. Surprisingly, he got away with it at first. A year passed. Atwill completed his role as Moriarty on June 19, 1942, and 11 days later was indicted and charged with perjury. Following a second charge, Atwill confessed to owning the stag films and found himself a Hollywood pariah, unemployed by almost every studio save Universal, who cast him as a mayor in *FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLF MAN* (1943) and police officials in *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1944) and *HOUSE OF DRACULA* (1945). The actor divorced Louise, married fourth wife Mary, fathered a son (John Atwill, his child by first wife Poppy, had been killed in action in 1941), and was slowly rebuilding his life when he was felled by bronchial cancer on April 22, 1946, at the age of 61.

*SECRET WEAPON* wasn't Atwill's first appearance in the Holmes series (he played Dr. Mortimer in 1939's *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES*), but it marked the debut of two valued regulars, one in front of the camera, one behind. Onscreen, Dennis Hoey made the first of six appearances as Inspector Lestrade—not the sallow, rat-faced original of Conan Doyle's stories, but a looming bulk of a man. (The actor was taller than Rathbone.) Dr. Watson having been dumbed down by Nigel Bruce, Lestrade by necessity had to be rendered even dumber. Despite this, Hoey made Lestrade oddly endearing. Like Watson, he always came through in a pinch. (Hoey played virtually the same role in *FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLF MAN*, dressed in the same bowler and raincoat, but renamed

# SECRET WEAPON

Inspector Owen in the shrewd belief that the world of Sherlock Holmes didn't mix with genuine werewolves and man-made monstrosities.)

Roy William Neill was the new face behind the camera, directing and (with the exception of *SHERLOCK HOLMES IN WASHINGTON*) producing every remaining film in the series. Neill, whose best-regarded work prior to the Holmes films was as director of the Boris Karloff chiller *THE BLACK ROOM* (1935), and who directed the aforementioned summit meeting between *The Wolf Man* and *Frankenstein's Monster*, had a knack for subtly stressing the horrific elements of a story. Under his hand, World War II gradually faded into the background, to be replaced by phosphorescent swamp things, Spider Women, and Hoxton Creepers.

*SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE SECRET WEAPON* is one of two series entries that refer to the Great Detective's addiction to a 7% solution of cocaine. (The other is *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES*.) When Holmes suggests an elaborate means by which Moriarty can dispose of him, explaining what he would do to Moriarty if their positions were reverse—"I should have you placed on an operating table, inject a needle into your veins, and slowly draw off your life's blood"—the professor replies, "The needle to the last, eh, Holmes?" Hollywood's censorship board, the Breen Office, forbid such references to drug habits, and must have been drugged itself to let Moriarty's needling of his adversary pass.

Once viewers accept the initial premise of the Universal films—that Holmes is alive and well and battling Nazis in 1940s England—it's possible to enjoy and even admire the variations played on some classic canonical themes. *SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE SECRET WEAPON* is especially clever, taking Conan Doyle's basic plot device from "The Dancing Men" (a substitution code consisting of stick-figure terpsichoreans) and using it as the clue to the secret hiding places of several pieces of machinery that, put together, make a bombsight coveted by both England and Germany. Additionally, the screenplay makes good use of the false-bottomed coffin (in this instance, a sea chest) from the 1911 short story "The Disappearance of Lady Frances

Carfax" and Holmes' bookseller disguise from 1903's "The Empty House." Nevertheless, it might have been wiser had Universal taken a cue from the Rathbone/Bruce radio series and, rather than proclaim *THE SECRET WEAPON* as "based on" Conan Doyle's "The Dancing Men"—which the film does during the opening credits—used the phrase "suggested by an incident in" instead.

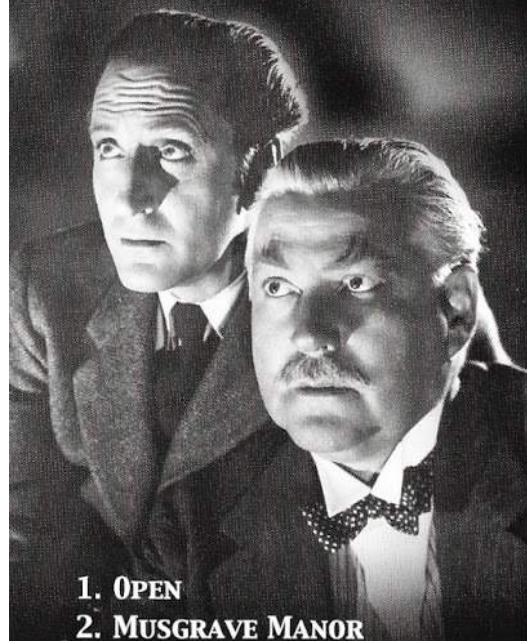
Still, it's all good, clean fun, and sharp-eyed Sherlockians will note that someone at Universal must have been utilizing a secret code of his own—the only possible explanation for the Napoleon of Crime's name being misspelled "Moriarty" in the closing credits.





# Sherlock Holmes

## FACES DEATH



1. OPEN
2. MUSGRAVE MANOR
3. DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE
4. "A KILLER LOOSE!"
5. EXTRAORDINARY PATIENTS
6. "THAT APPALLING MAN FROM SCOTLAND YARD"
7. THE MUSGRAVE RITUAL
8. THE RAT AND THE RAVEN
9. THE BUTLER DID IT?
10. THE RITUAL SOLVED
11. CHECKMATE
12. END CREDITS

Like SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE SECRET WEAPON (1942) before it, SHERLOCK HOLMES FACES DEATH (1943) takes one of the canon's best-loved tales and fashions an entirely new mystery around its central conceit. With THE SECRET WEAPON, the source was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's short story "The Adventure of the Dancing Men" (1903). In the case of FACES DEATH, it's "The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual" (1893). Conan Doyle's narrative concerns the third investigation in the Great Detective's career, conducted, as Holmes tells Dr. Watson, "prematurely before my biographer had come to glorify me." These early, unrecorded inquiries include "the case of Vamberg, the wine merchant, and the adventure of the old Russian woman, and the singular affair of the aluminum crutch, as well as a full account of Ricolletti of the club-foot, and his abominable wife." Then there's "The Musgrave Ritual." Aristocratic Reginald Musgrave entreats old university classmate Holmes to investigate when his sly, handsome, womanizing butler, Richard Brunton, vanishes without a trace after being caught rifling through the Musgrave family papers. Before long, Rachel Howells, the maid who was the butler's recent sexual conquest, also takes a powder. It's all tied up with the family ritual, a ceremony handed down through generations of Musgraves, its meaning lost in time.

The story's Musgrave Ritual contains such ligneous phrases as "over the oak" and "under the elm," but they were discarded by Universal studio writer Bertram Millhauser, who instead fashioned his own variation of the ceremony. He was hardly the first or the last to do so. Pride of place goes to T. S. Eliot, who devised a new ritual for his 1935 play MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL. ("My use of the Musgrave Ritual was deliberate and wholly conscious," wrote Eliot.) When it came time to remake the story for the British TV series THE RETURN OF SHERLOCK HOLMES (1986), dramatist Jeremy Paul found it again necessary to make some minor

"YOU WERE RIGHT, WATSON, ABOUT MUSGRAVE MANOR. HOUSES, LIKE PEOPLE, HAVE DEFINITE PERSONALITIES, AND THIS PLACE IS POSITIVELY GHOULISH."

— Sherlock Holmes

changes, since no suitable location containing the trees essential to the untangling of the puzzle could be found. (The solution: a tree-shaped weather vane atop the Musgrave family estate.) Paul's restructuring met with considerable praise — most notably in the scowling form of an Edgar, the much-coveted award from the Mystery Writers of America. For his part, Millhauser rewrote the ritual to emulate the moves in an elaborate chess game, played out on the checkerboard floor of Musgrave Manor's main hall. And instead of Reginald Musgrave, we're presented with grouchy old Geoffrey Musgrave (Frederick Worlock), sardonic Phillip Musgrave (Gavin Muir), and pretty Sally Musgrave (Hillary Brooke), the first two viciously murdered during the course of the story, the last the only remaining obstacle in the killer's path to untold riches.

Born in Astoria, New York, on September 8, 1914, Hillary Brooke's modeling career led to acting and her 1937 film debut in NEW FACES OF 1937. She made the first of three Holmes series appearances in SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE VOICE OF TERROR (1942), in the minor role of a military woman assigned to chauffeur our heroes around a war-torn London. Brooke excelled at playing haughty, often unscrupulous blondes whose blood ran blue from the chill of her icy demeanor, and did so to fine effect in MINISTRY OF FEAR (1944), ROAD TO UTOPIA (1946), and STRANGE JOURNEY (1946), among other films. AFRICA SCREAMS (1949), in which she played yet another frigid femme fatale, marked the first of many teamings with Bud Abbott and Lou Costello. In 1953, she scaled the heights of emotionless evil, starring as the dehumanized mom of little Jimmy Hunt in INVADERS FROM MARS. Brooke was silkily villainous in THE WOMAN IN GREEN (1945), her third and last appearance in the Holmes series, but in SHERLOCK HOLMES FACES DEATH, in a role originally intended for Marjorie Lord; she's uncharacteristically the helpless, sometimes hysterical heroine.

In a 1995 interview for Scarlet Street magazine, Hillary Brooke fondly recalled the Holmes films and her costars, Basil Rathbone and Nigel (Willie) Bruce:

"I adored them both. Of course, I just loved character actors! At the time, people used to ask me, 'Why don't you do some of those plays down on Melrose?' They had a little theater on Melrose and Santa Monica Boulevard. I said, 'Why should I do that when I can make films, get paid for it, and get the best instruction in the whole world from all the character actors? Why should I act in plays and work with someone who's just as bad as I am?' I've always felt such a warm spot in my heart for them, because they were so good to me.

"Basil Rathbone and I both loved animals and, many times, when we weren't working, we would go to the commissary and get ice cream cones and go down to the back lot. Universal had a little menagerie, and we'd go down and see the lions. Basil was a nice man. He looked very haughty, very elegant — but he was a very real person. His wife was the great party-giver. He wasn't that keen on it, but she just loved to give parties.

"Willie was also very wonderful; I not only knew Willie, but I knew his family. He was joking all the time. During the string of Sherlock Holmes pictures, we really had a wonderful time together. They still have such a tremendous audience. Between the Sherlock Holmes pictures and the Abbott and Costello pictures — really, that's what keeps me in front of the audience today. I get a lot of fan mail and either a Sherlock Holmes or an Abbott and Costello picture is usually responsible."

Willie — or rather, Dr. Watson — is smarter than usual in SHERLOCK HOLMES FACES DEATH, as befits the head physician of a convalescent home for battle-scarred military officers. His only bout of sustained bumbling turns out to be part of an elaborate ruse concocted by Holmes to pave the way for the killer's capture. However, this doesn't stop the Great Detective from making derisory observations at his companion's expense. (Watson: Simple reasoning. A child could do it. Holmes: Not your child, Watson.) The good doctor deserves better: when Holmes is very close to finding himself the victim of his own clever trap, Watson is there, gun in hand, to save him — as, surprisingly, is Lestrade (Dennis Hoey), who is otherwise at his most idiotic, jailing an innocent man and losing himself in the



# FACES DEATH

manor's many secret passageways.

Milhauser's screenplay retains the short story's servants, though they're much altered. The suave, youngish Richard Brunton becomes the drunken, aged Alfred Brunton played by character actor Halliwell Hobbs. Love-struck Rachel Howells is transformed into somber housekeeper Mrs. Howells (Minna Phillips), who is secretly the butler's wife. Watson's three most prominent patients are enacted by series regulars Vernon Downing (two Holmes films) Gerald Hamer (five films), and Olaf Hytten (seven films). Norma Varden, whose specialty was playing dithery society matrons and murder victims (as in 1957's *WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION*), makes her only series appearance as Gracie, the barmaid at *The Rat and the Raven*. Peter Lawford, just embarking on his Hollywood career, shows up in the small role of a thirsty sailor.

*SHERLOCK HOLMES FACES DEATH* is the first entry to be not only directed, but also produced by Roy William Neill (following the promotion of Howard Benedict, associate producer of the first three films, to executive producer). Neill pours on the grim Gothic atmosphere—dark and stormy nights, bloodthirsty ravens, dank burial crypts, a tower clock that strikes 13 hours as a prelude to death—setting the pattern for the remaining films in the series, which pay scant heed to World War II and the Nazi threat. But for Watson's patients and the convalescent home setting, the action might just as well be set in the previous century. The next Holmes film—1944's *THE SPIDER WOMAN*, following a brief cameo by Rathbone and Bruce in the Ole Olsen and Chic Johnson comedy *CRAZY HOUSE* (1943)—would reduce the wartime references even further, after which they vanished altogether in the fog-shrouded Canadian moors of *THE SCARLET CLAW* (1944).

In the year of his promotion to Holmesian producer, Neill directed the first encounter between two of Universal's popular supernatural fiends: *FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLF MAN* (1943). Horror fans will find themselves on familiar (burial) grounds in *SHERLOCK HOLMES FACES DEATH*. The film's quaint English village saw

frequent use as the European hamlets of *Frankenstein* and *Vasaria* (sometimes *Visaria*), and the crypt beneath *Musgrave Manor* served a similar deathly function in 1931's *DRACULA*. (The *Dracula* set had previously turned up in 1942's *SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE VOICE OF TERROR*, doubling as a bombed-out church.) Even a jagged bolt of lightning, courtesy of Kenneth Strickfaden (creator of *Dr. Frankenstein's* mad lab equipment), puts in an appearance. Though some of the phantasmagoria is never explained, Basil Rathbone anchors the melodrama in the reality essential to a good Sherlock Holmes adventure.

"Basil was such a lovely man," remembered Hillary Brooke, "so easy to work with. It was such a happy company. The picture business today has changed a great deal. It's not a family, as it used to be. Of course, Basil and Willie made it so easy. You know, a lot of people delve very deeply into Sherlock Holmes, and I think that Basil was the epitome of Holmes. I think he was far better than anyone else who has ever played it."



# Sherlock Holmes IN WASHINGTON



1. OPEN
2. THE FATE OF THE EMPIRE
3. 221B BAKER STREET
4. A COLLECTOR OF COLLECTIONS
5. MR. HOLMES GOES TO WASHINGTON
6. THE TRAINED DETECTIVE
7. THE MATCH GAME
8. TRAVELING BY CARPET
9. SHERLOCK'S MATCH
10. THE ECCENTRIC ART COLLECTOR
11. DANGEROUS ANTIQUITIES
12. GAME, SET AND MATCH
13. END CREDITS

Though Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce were absent from movie screens as Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson for three years following the release of the second and last of the 20th Century Fox films (1939's *ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES*), they could still be heard weekly as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's immortal characters on a popular radio series, eventually racking up 213 half-hour episodes between 1940 and 1946. There were no retakes on radio, of course, no second chances, and sometimes the rapid-fire dialogue got the better of Rathbone, with unintentionally hilarious results. The star had an especially rough night late in the run, during the January 21, 1946 broadcast of a story titled "The Tell Tale Pigeon Feathers." Rathbone had already made several mistakes as the episode approached its thrilling climax. Finally, when it came time to unmask the culprit, Rathbone tripped over the vital word "feathers" and triumphantly demanded, "Then how do you account for the pigeon fellows on the collar of your coat?"

Needless to say, the culprit couldn't account for them at all!

In front of the cameras, Rathbone and Bruce were usually given the opportunity to correct the occasional verbal mishap. Nevertheless, one error found its way into Universal's *SHERLOCK HOLMES IN WASHINGTON* (1943), the fifth film in the series. Holmes and Watson have traveled far from their beloved London, and the world's greatest detective in particular misses his rooms in 221B Baker Street and his many test tubes and chemicals. As he puts it to Detective Lieutenant Grogan (Edmund MacDonald), "I'm so accustomed to working quite alone at my bldgings in Baker Street..."

*SHERLOCK HOLMES IN WASHINGTON* was written by Lynn Riggs and Bertram Milhauser. Riggs had already worked on *SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE VOICE OF TERROR* (1942), the first of the Universal entries. Milhauser was new to the series, though not to the lead character, having



"YOU'RE PLAYING WITH LIVES, NOW, STANLEY—NOT JUST THE GIRL'S. THOUSANDS! MILLIONS, PERHAPS! AND WE DON'T INTEND TO LET ONE MAN HAVE THAT MUCH POWER. NOT NOW, NOT AT ANY TIME IN THE FUTURE . . ."

—*Sherlock Holmes*

scripted SHERLOCK HOLMES (with Clive Brook in the title role) in 1932. The scenarists based their screenplay not on a specific Conan Doyle story, but used the gimmick (dubbed the MacGuffin by Alfred Hitchcock) of a specific object whose only true import is to spark the plot—the object, in this case, being a matchbook containing top-secret microfilm. It's a structural device that the series returned to periodically, sometimes in a film based on a canonical story (1944's *THE PEARL OF DEATH*, in which the object is the Borgia pearl, hidden in one of six busts of Napoleon) and sometimes in one invented from whole cloth (1946's *DRESSED TO KILL*, in which several music boxes play a coded tune that leads to the missing Bank of England printing plates). The simple structure gives Holmes ample opportunity to practice the fine art of deduction, in this instance taking him from his familiar home turf to wartime Washington, DC.

Also Hitchcockian is an early sequence of espionage and false identities set on a train, reminiscent of scenes in *THE LADY VANISHES* (1938) and *NORTH BY NORTHWEST* (1959). A gang of spies led by William Easter (Henry Daniell) tries to identify a British agent from a group that includes Sir Henry Marchmont (Gilbert Emery), a British diplomat; Senator Henry Babcock (Thurston Hall), a hearty fellow fond of grape juice "from my home state;" Miss Pringle (Margaret Seddon), who travels with a cage full of mice; Mrs. Jellison (Alice Fleming), a flighty socialite; Nancy Patridge (Marjorie Lord), a young beauty en route to her wedding; and John Grayson (Gerald Hamer), a timid employee of a London legal firm. ("Used to know a man named Grayson," says Senator Babcock. "Mighty fine man. He was murdered.")

A likely influence on another scene was Raymond Chandler, who later collaborated with Hitchcock on the screenplay for yet another railway thriller—*STRANGERS ON A TRAIN* (1951). During the course of his investigation, Holmes visits an antique shop, immediately adopting the fey, fussy mannerisms of a stereotypical gay man. In his 1939 debut novel *The Big Sleep*, Chandler has his own private eye, Philip Marlowe, infiltrate a

bookstore specializing in first editions by adopting markedly similar behavior. ("I had my horn-rimmed glasses on. I put my voice high and let a bird twitter in it.") In the Holmes film, the antique shop is a front for the spy ring; in Chandler's novel (and the 1946 film version, directed by Howard Hawks) the bookstore doubles as marketplace for under-the-counter pornography.

Led by Rathbone and Bruce, the film's cast is solid. (In particular, Bruce has a field day, as Watson strives to adapt to American ways by spouting slang, chewing gum, and slurping milk shakes like a geriatric Andy Hardy.) Gerald Hamer is gently touching as the doomed British agent, and Thurston Hall is all bluff cheer as the senator from an oddly unidentified, though clearly grape-ridden state. In a small but showy role as a porter, black actor Clarence Muse brings his usual dignity to a character that, in lesser hands, would have been pure stereotype. Leading lady Marjorie Lord is best remembered today as the second sitcom wife of Danny Thomas on the 1950s-1960s teleseries *MAKE ROOM FOR DADDY* (retitled *THE DANNY THOMAS SHOW*). Thanks to *SHERLOCK HOLMES IN WASHINGTON*, she wound up a wife in real life, marrying her leading man, John Archer. (Daughter Anne Archer, continues the family acting tradition in such films as 1987's *FATAL ATTRACTION* and 1992's *PATRIOT GAMES*.)

One of the special joys of the series lays in its colorful villains, from the Spider Woman to Professor Moriarty, the Napoleon of Crime. Three of the screen's top miscreants essayed the role of Moriarty during the series' seven-year run: George Zucco (*ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES*), Lionel Atwill (1942's *SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE SECRET WEAPON*), and Henry Daniell (1945's *THE WOMAN IN GREEN*). In *SHERLOCK HOLMES IN WASHINGTON*, Rathbone is reunited with Zucco and Daniell (who had a small role in *VOICE OF TERROR*), but neither plays the reptilian professor. As William Easter, Daniell handles the evildoing in the film's establishing scenes with chilly aplomb, identifying Grayson as the British agent and killing him, though not before Grayson passes the matchbook containing the microfilm to a fellow

# IN WASHINGTON

passenger. Zucco makes a surprisingly late entrance as antique shop owner Richard Stanley, whose real name—Heinrich Hinkle—points to his primary profession of German spy. One wonders if Herr Heinrich is related to a certain Adenoid Hinkle, *THE GREAT DICTATOR* of Charles Chaplin's 1939 film. For that matter, though it's unlikely, Heinkle's American alias may also be something of an in-joke. Heinkle's quest is for a piece of film, and Richard Stanley is a character in *THE MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER* (filmed shortly before *SHERLOCK HOLMES IN WASHINGTON*), one whose passionate hobby is photography.

*SHERLOCK HOLMES IN WASHINGTON* marked the Great Detective's first foray to the United States, and Universal considered setting more mysteries in the colonies before wiser heads prevailed. (In 1944, however, Holmes and Watson journeyed to Canada to investigate *THE SCARLET CLAW*.) Not only did the studio return its heroes to Baker Street, but, sparked by the influence of producer/director Roy William Neill, it gradually cut back on the topical references to World War II and plunged Conan Doyle's characters back into a fog-shrouded milieu that was Victorian in all but fact.

A word about Nigel Bruce's portrayal of Dr. John H. Watson as a bumbling fool, which is often the object of derision among dyed-in-the-deerstalker Sherlockians. There's no denying that, in the actor's hands, Watson is often clownish, but it should also be noted that Rathbone's Holmes rarely passes up a chance to make his friend look silly. Here's a single example. Inspired by incidents in Conan Doyle's 1904 short story "The Six Napoleons," Riggs and Milhauser have several train passengers in *SHERLOCK HOLMES IN WASHINGTON* accosted by the villains. Senator Babcock is mugged, Mrs. Jellison's home is ransacked, and poor Miss Pringle's pet cage is torn apart. "What happened to the mice, I wonder?" muses the good doctor, not unreasonably. "An intriguing line of thought, Watson," replies Holmes, smugly, "but not essential to the case."

It would have served the Great Detective right if Grayson had slipped the microfilm into a mouse instead of a matchbook.

—*Richard Valley is the publisher of Scarlet Street magazine (www.scarletstreet.com) and also a playwright whose comedies have been produced in New York, Boston, Minneapolis, and other cities.*





*Sherlock Holmes*  
AND THE **VOICE of  
TERROR**



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*Sherlock Holmes*  
AND THE  
**SECRET  
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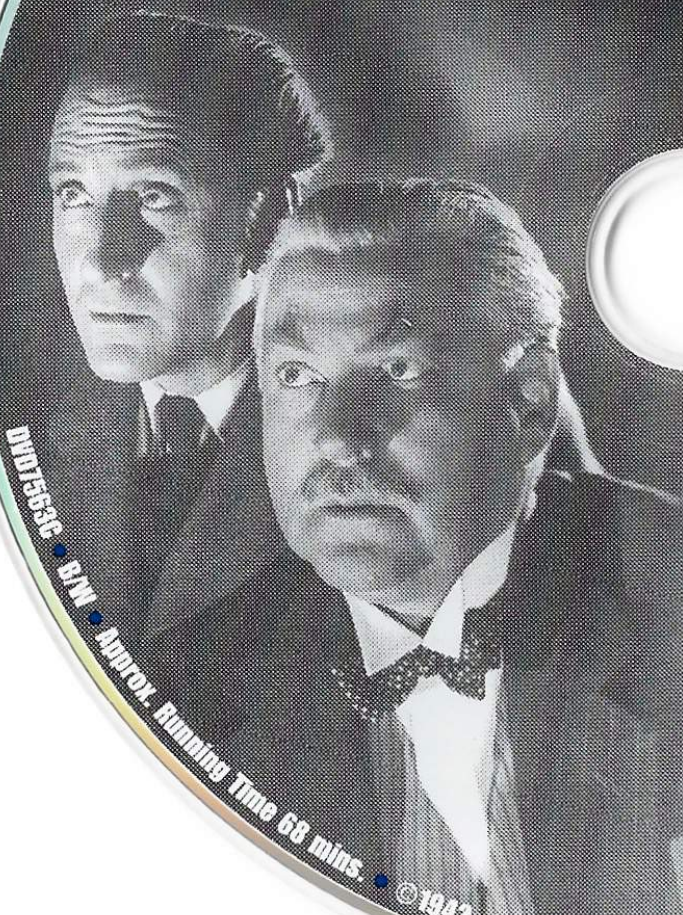
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